



# Singing in the Dark Times

*Women Remember*

World Court of Women  
against War, for Peace

Oliver Tambo Centre  
Khayelitsha  
Cape Town, South Africa  
March 6 - 9, 2001



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World Court Of Women against War, for Peace  
March 6 - 9, 2001  
Cape Town, South Africa

Asian Women's Human Rights Council  
El Taller International



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**Women Remember**

*Publication of the*  
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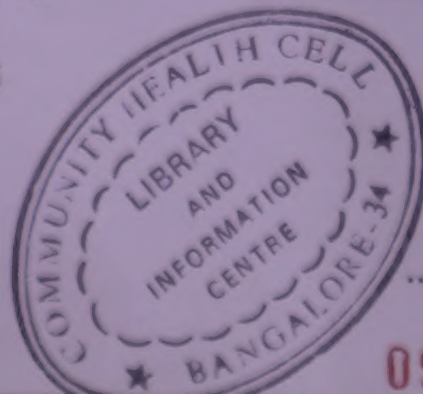
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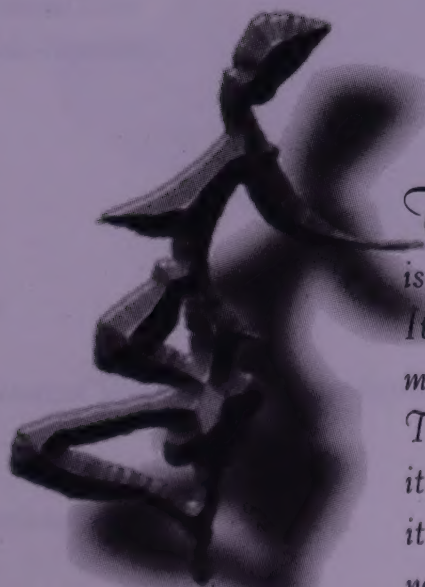
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*This eye  
is not for weeping  
Its vision  
must be unblurred  
Though tears are on my face  
its intent is clarity  
it must forget  
nothing*







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## Introduction

share with me an attention  
to the drunkenness of light,  
the light of the butterfly  
in the blackness of this tunnel

Mahmoud Darwish

*The World Court of Women Against War for Peace was held from March 6-9, 2001, in Cape Town, South Africa. It was a powerful event : and poignant.*

*It was a renaissance of memory, a collective retrieval of all that has been silenced, even forgotten. The Court was an act against forgetting: an attempt to challenge the dominant discourse, to disrupt the logic, the logic of war, the logic of its militarised structure and militarised mindset; to re-write our history, to re-find the dream.*

*In the rubble of war, in the remnants of peace, we rummage for songs, for symbols, for rain, for rainbows, for light and for new poetry ; as we listened to the testimonies of women from situations of war and armed conflict in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Palestine, Bosnia ; Women telling their stories of the most grotesque faces of nuclear, chemical and biological warfare ; Hiroshima, Marshall Islands, Vietnam, Chernobyl, Cuba, modern wars . Women bringing testimonies on the wars in times of peace – the wars of poverty, of development ; of globalisation ; the deepening dispossession of women, the wars of colonisation against cultures and civilizations, fundamentalist wars. Women bringing testimonies on brutalising patriarches in all our cultures – of female infanticide, dowry burning, honour crimes, witch killing , tokosi – a violence that seems endless - the wars against women.*



*And we listened too to the voices of resistance to wars and the violence in our times from all over the world : Women who brought testimonies of resistance speaking of the need for truth and reconciliation and justice, even as the violence is taking more intense and genocidal forms ; women offering new paths to peace, new concepts of dignity, new notions of justice, inviting each other to seek new horizons, to break new ground knowing, that another world must be possible and that the violence of wars and the violence against women must become unthinkable.*

*And that brought hope as*

*We give each other seeds for a new way  
We give each other the moon shining on a fire of singing women  
We give each other the sounds of our feet dancing  
We give each other the sounds of our thoughts flying  
We give each other the sounds of peace*

*Chrystos*

*It was in the beautiful poetic line of Audre Lourde, a burst of light.*

*While we have attempted to bring into this publication, all the voices that spoke and reports on the many events held, this has not been possible. While we hope to include what has been left out in our future publications, what is gathered here, is in itself a strong and irrefutable evidence of the genocidal violence being perpetrated by the wars of the last century.*

*And evidence too of the tremendous strength and resilience of those who are resisting and rejecting this violence.*

**Editorial Collective**

## Towards a New Political Imaginary

Corinne Kumar

*International Coordinator - Court of Women*

*We live in violent times:*

*times in which our community and collective memories are dying;  
times in which the many dreams are turning into never-ending nightmares;  
and the future increasingly fragmenting;  
times that are collapsing the many life visions into a single cosmology that has  
created its own universal truths- equality, development, peace;  
truths that are inherently discriminatory, even violent.  
times that have created a development model that dispossesses the majority,  
desacralizes nature, destroys cultures and civilizations, denigrates the women;  
times in which the dominant political thinking, institutions and instruments  
of justice are hardly able to redress the violence that is escalating, and  
intensifying,  
times in which progress presupposes the genocide of the many;  
times in which human rights have come to mean the rights of the privileged,  
the rights of the powerful  
times in which the political spaces for the other is diminishing, even closing.*

*The world, it would seem, is at the end of its imagination.*



## Testimony

*We have begun to believe that we are fragments; that our stories are disconnected from each other; the enemies are safely ensconced within our minds and hearts, and none of us escapes. This World Court is a moment of connection to remind us that we are in the movement: and that we do have power.*

*We must forge new definitions of manhood for all our fathers, for all our sons; so, collectively we can restore the power of love and courage.....*

*Perhaps the time has come to light up those parts of ourselves we have kept hidden in fear, in shame, in ambiguity; to hear our voices come from deep within.*

(Pregs Govender: Expert Witness on Militarisation, Patriarchy and Racism: World Court against Racism, Durban, South Africa, August 2001.)

*We need new stories for our times:  
even new storytellers*

So let me gather some stars and make a fire for you, and tell you a story:

It is a story of horror and hope; a story of the disappeared; a story so real, yet magical: a story from Lawrence Thornton in *Imagining Argentina*.

It is a story about Argentina under the dictators. The hero is a gentle person Carlos Rueda, an intense man who directs a children's theatre and is at home in the world of children.

During the time of the dictators, Carlos discovers that he has an extraordinary gift. He realizes that he is the site, the locus, *the vessel for a dream*. He can narrate the fate of the missing.

From all over Argentina, men and women come to his home and sitting in his garden, Carlos tells them stories : tales of torture, courage, luck, death, stories about the missing. All around the house are birds, tropical in hope, each a memory of a lost friend.

One day the regime arrests his wife Celia, for a courageous act of reporting. The world of Carlos collapses till he realizes that he must keep her alive in his imagination.

*Only the imagination, says Carlos, stands between us and terror; terror makes us behave like sheep when we must dream like poets.*

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One day the regime arrests his wife Celia, for a courageous act of reporting. The world of Carlos collapses till he realizes that he must keep her alive in his imagination.

*Only the imagination, says Carlos, stands between us and terror; terror makes us behave like sheep when we must dream like poets.*

Carlos realizes that for the regime there are only two kinds of people: sheep and terrorists. Terrorists are those who dare to differ or dare to dream differently. Carlos enters the world of the tortured.

As the regime becomes more violent, it is the women who object. It is the women as wives, as mothers, as daughters who congregate in silence at the *Plaza de Mayo*. Quietly, silently each carries a placard announcing or asking about the missing. Vaclav Haval calls it *the power of the powerless*. The women walk quietly, sometimes holding hands.

It is not just an act of protest; it is *a drama of caring*; each listening to the other's story, each assuring the other through touch, weaving a sense of community.

The community grows as the men join them.

All the while, through the window, the Generals watch them. One General in particular, face like a mask, eyes covered with inscrutable goggles. It is the totalitarianism of the eye encountering the community of the ear. General Guzman is the observer, the eye in search of intelligence. His falcon cars sweep the city, picking people at random.



People realize that they cannot be indifferent observers, spectators, bystanders, even experts. The indifference of the watchers to the spectacles of the regime won't do.

One must be a witness.

A witness is not a mere spectator.

She *looks* but she also *listens*.

She *remembers*.

She meets the vigilance of the eye through remembering.

Thornton shows that the world of torture is a strange world. It maims the victim, emasculates the body and the self. Carlos writes a children's play called *Names* which evokes every man, every woman, every torture. Everything must be recited. Nothing must be forgotten. Every scream must be redeemed with a name.

*We must explore the new imaginary not as experts but as witnesses.*

It is not difficult to see that we are at the end of an era, 'when every old category begins to have a hollow sound, and when we are groping in the dark to discover the new'.<sup>1</sup> Can we find new words, search new ways, create out of the material of the human spirit possibilities to transform the existing exploitative social order, to discern a greater human potential?

What we need in the world today are new universalisms; not universalisms that deny the many and affirm the one, not universalisms born of eurocentricities or patriarchalities; but universalisms that *recognize the universal in the specific civilisational idioms in the world*. Universalisms that will not deny the accumulated experiences and knowledges of past generations but that which will not accept the imposition of any monolithic structures under which it is presumed all other peoples must be subsumed. New universalisms that will challenge the universal mode - the logic of development, science, technology, patriarchy, militarisation, nuclearism, war. Universalisms that will respect the plurality of the different societies, of their philosophy, of their ideology, their traditions and cultures; one that will be rooted in the particular, in the vernacular, one which will find a resonance in the different civilizations, *birthing new cosmologies*.



This could be the wind from the South *rising in all its grandeur* bringing much to this cosmology. The South Wind then, as the movements for change in the world, the South as the voices and movements of *people on the edges*, wherever these movements unfold; the South as the *visions of women*; the South as the development of *new frameworks*, seeking a new language to describe what it perceives, rupturing the existing theoretical categories, breaking the mind constructs, challenging the one, objective world view as the only world view; the South Wind as the *seeking of new knowledges*, refusing the one, mechanistic scientific knowledge as the only legitimate knowledge; the South Wind as the *discovery of other knowledges* that have been silenced. The South as the finding of new definitions of knowledge, of politics, creating *new paradigms of politics; new paradigms of knowledge*.

The South Wind must reclaim the subjective and the objective modes of knowing, creating richer and deeper structures of knowledge in which the observer is not distanced from the observed, the researcher from the researched, poverty from the poor;

This new cosmology will move away from the eurocentric and andocentric methodologies which only observe and describe; methodologies which quantify, percentify, classify, completely indifferent to phenomena which cannot be obtained or explained through its frames. We need to deconstruct the dominant mythology, disallowing the invasion of the dominant discourse; refusing the integration of the South into the agenda of globalisation. The South Wind invites us to create a new spectrum of methods which depart from the linear mode of thought and perception to one that is more *holistic, holographic*. It urges us to search more qualitative methodologies in oral history, experiential analysis, action-research, fluid categories, *listening for the nuances, searching for the shadow*, in poetry, in myth, in metaphor, in magic. The South Wind invites us to a way of knowing that refuses to control and exploit Nature, to use and abuse Nature, but one that finds our *connectedness to Nature*, to place together these fragments, to discern the essence, to move into another space, another time, recapturing hidden knowledges, regenerating forgotten spaces, refinding other cosmologies, reweaving the future. It is here perhaps, that the notion of the sacred survives; it is here in the cosmologies and rootedness of cultures; here with peoples on the peripheries that we must seek the beginnings of *an alternate discourse*.

*Our imaginaries must be different:*

We need to imagine alternative visions for change: to craft visions that will evolve out of conversations across cultures and other traditions; 'conversations and inquiring can conceivably happen in a framework of exchange, mutuality and equity rather than appropriation': <sup>2</sup>conversations that are not mediated by the hegemony of the *universal* discourse.

'So, may be instead of asking indigenous minds to accommodate and stretch themselves into linearity and monocausality by giving definitions satisfactory within the western paradigm, maybe this is the time for minds trained in eurocentric ways of thinking to stretch into the narrative nature of *beingknowing*. Colonisation can be very subtle through the invasion of the innermost ways of beingknowing'.<sup>3</sup>

The South Wind invites us to another human rights discourse; one that will not be trapped either in the *universalisms* of the dominant discourse tied as it is to a market economy, a monoculturalism, a materialistic ethic and the politics and polity of the nation state; neither must it be caught in the discourse of the *culture specific* but one that will proffer universalisms that have been born out of a *dialogue of civilisations*. And this will mean another *ethic of dialogue*. We need to find new perspectives on the universality of human rights: *in dialogue with other cultural perspectives of reality*, other notions of development, democracy, even dissent, other concepts of power and governance; other notions of equality, other concepts of justice because *human kind proffers many horizons of discourse*.

Take the *universal* discourse on *democracy*.



## Testimony

*I remember as a child a lot of sadness around me associated with sickness and death. My grandparents were part of the displaced. Aboriginal tribes. Our particular clan were taken to three different locations many miles apart and settled in a very strange and different environment from which they had lived. One group was camped in an area which, when a windstorm came uncovered human bones. The people were very frightened, and said it was a burial site. One person a month died for nine months and the people believed it was punishment for being where they should not be. I found out many years later that they had died of tuberculosis. I lost my grandmother and my mother's sister to this disease. The church stepped in and moved myself and my two brothers to institutions many miles from our family and to make it worse separated me from my brothers.*

The dominant understanding on democracy is tied to the notion of individual rights, private property, the market economy; *we are all equal we are told* but the market works as the guarantor of inequality, of unequal distribution, of how only a few will be rich and how the many must live below the poverty line. What shall we do with the rhetoric of political equality on which this democracy is built, while the majority live below poverty lines? We must seek new concepts of democracy; that will include a concept of freedom that is different from that which is enshrined in the Enlightenment and its Market. There is an urgent need to reinvent the political; to infuse the political with the ethical:

### *An ethic of care.*

In 1996, Madeleine Albright the then US Secretary of State was asked what she felt about the 500,000 Iraqi children who had died as a result of US economic sanctions (in the name of UN Security Council), in the context of the continuing war. Was it a high price to pay? She replied that it was a very hard choice but *yes, all things considered, we think that the price is worth it.* Lives of children lost in wars are considered *collateral damage*; But in the world of rights we all are equal; each have the fundamental right to life.

*Aboriginal people were not allowed to speak their language in front of the children; punishment would have meant the removal of children.*

*I was just one of the many thousands of children taken from their mothers and each of us have our own private and bitter memories and later problems of adjustment. As a child in school I was taught as all children were that Aboriginies were savages and cannibals, lazy and dirty, and we felt deep shame.*

*Shame was a legacy given to us by white people and still operates in our lives. After I married and had children I was happy that the children were not dark like me and perhaps they would not experience racism and disadvantage as myself and my mother had.*

(Testimony brought by Pam Greer, Australia on the Stolen Generation; Speaking Tree, Women Speak, Asia Pacific Court of Women on Crimes against Women related to the Violence of Development, Bangalore, India, January 1995.)

*We live in a world being uprooted:*

The dominant way of the world is fragmenting and dichotomising people and phenomena along hierarchical and hegemonic lines. In his *Exterminate All the Brutes*, a unique study of *European History in Africa* Sven Lindqvist writes:

Eventually the facts trickled out. Of course, educated French men knew roughly, or even quite precisely, by what means their colonies were captured and administered. Just as educated French men in the 1950's and 1960's knew what their troops were up to in Vietnam and Algeria.

Just as educated Russians in the 1980s knew what their troops did in Afghanistan, and educated South Africans and Americans during the same period knew what their *auxillaries* were doing in Mozambique and Central America respectively.

Just as educated Europeans (North) today know how children die when the whip of debt whistles over poor countries.

*It is not knowledge that is lacking.*

The educated general public has always largely known what *outrages* have been committed in the name of Progress, Civilisation, Democracy and the Market.<sup>4</sup>

And Human Rights And Justice And Freedom: *Enduring Freedom*.

Everywhere in the world where knowledge is being suppressed, knowledge that, if it were made known, would shatter our image of the world and force us to question ourselves-everywhere the *Heart of Darkness* is being enacted.



*We need to find new imaginaries for the global south;*

We need to develop the social imagination for *sustainability* as a basis for sustainable living, for the language of deficit cutting and economic growth *masks an inability to imagine* the world in more sustaining and life enhancing terms.

An imaginary where people of the margins, of the *global south* are subjects of their own history, writing their own cultural narratives, offering new universals, *constructing a new radical imaginary.*

In its Declaracion de Managua, the III Encuentro Continental de Resistencia Indigena, Negra y Popular, in 1992 reaffirming its campaign against the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1492-1992) of colonialism was incisive, passionate, compassionate.

An extract:

After five hundred years we stand:

Regrouping ourselves from our own roots, men, women, without distinctions of skin colour, language, cultures, territorial demarcation or frontier: recovering what is ours and constructing an alternative project to the one that threatens and attacks us; a project in which misery and suffering are excluded: in which our culture, languages and beliefs flourish with neither fears nor prohibitions; in which we take back the forms of self government that made us great in the past: in which our aptitudes for art and beauty are strengthened, in which we destroy the chains of oppression on women; and in which Mother Nature is reconciled with her human children in her lap: in which *war remains a memory of bad times*; in which we can look each other in the face without feeling the shame of hate or scorn; linked, then, in love, solidarity and life.

The new imaginary cannot have its moorings in the dominant discourse but must seek to locate itself in a *discourse of dissent* that comes from a deep critique of the different forms of domination and violence in our times. Any new imaginary cannot be tied to the dominant discourse and systems of violence and exclusion.

The new imaginary invites us to an imaginary of sustainability, of life enhancement.

The new imaginary must be feminine.

### *Testimony*

*The women of the South must build a strong movement across boundaries, across cultures: that must challenge the mainstream. We do not want to remain in the stagnant waters of patriarchy: We need to find fresh flowing water*

*We need to know the river beneath the river.*

(Thenjiwe Mtintso, African National Congress, Excerpts from the testimony Voice of Resistance, World Court of Women against Racism, Durban, South Africa.)

### *Testimony*

*All the women's stories, the testimonies, the silent voices that flowed together in sublime harmony rather than disrupting each other created discourses that broke open and transgressed the silence of the social order, the silence of genocide; the silenced voices flowed together in the Court of Women that sought to recover the patterns of survival, women's survival and women's bonding, the social contract.*

(Biljana Kasic, Croatia, Expert Witness on Wars as Genocide, World Court of Women Against War for Peace, Cape Town, South Africa, March 2001)

As the poet says, 'we should now break the routine, do an extravagant action that would change the course of history, the logic of our development.' What is essential is to go beyond the politics of violence and terror of the times and *to find new imaginations, to sing our root song, to refind and touch the dream.*

The fire still continues to burn with help from the stars, so there is time for another little story; a story from the women, located in this discourse of dissent: inspired by an imaginary offered by a *South Wind*. A little experience proffered as an expression of this new imaginary that we explore not as expert, but as witness: *a witness who is not a mere spectator: who looks but also listens: who remembers so that nothing is forgotten.*





It is a story of the *Courts of Women*:

It was a dream of many years ago. It began in Asia and through the Asian Women's Human Rights Council who with several other women's rights groups has held seven Courts in the Asia Pacific region; and encouraged several more in the regions of the world- Africa, Arab world, Central America, Mediterranean.

The *Courts of Women* are an unfolding of a space, *an imaginary*: a horizon that invites us to think, to feel, to challenge, to connect, to dance, to dream.

It is an attempt to define a new space for women, and to infuse this space with a new vision, a new politics. It is a gathering of voices and visions of the *global south*, locating itself in a discourse of dissent: in itself it is a dislocating practice, challenging the new world order of globalisation, crossing lines, breaking new ground: listening to the voices and movements in the margins.

The *Courts of Women* seek to weave together the *objective* reality( through analyses of the issues) with the *subjective* testimonies of the women; the personal with the political; the *logical* with the *lyrical* (through video testimonies, artistic images and poetry) urging us to discern fresh insights, offering us other ways to know, inviting us to seek deeper layers of knowledge; towards creating a new knowledge paradigm.

The *Courts of Women* are public hearings: the *Court* is used in a symbolic way. In the Courts, the voices of the victims/ survivors are listened to. Women bring their personal testimonies of violence to the Court: the *Courts* are *sacred* spaces where women, speaking in a language of suffering, name the crimes, seeking redress, even reparation.

While the *Courts of Women* listen to the voices of the victims/ survivors, it also listens to the voices of women who resist, who rebel, who refuse to turn against their dreams. It hears the voices of women from the women's and human rights movements; it hears of survival in the *dailiness of life*; it hears of women and movements resisting violence in their myriad forms- war, ethnicity, fundamentalism; it hears of women struggling for work, wages, their rights to the land; it hears of how they survive- of their knowledges, their wisdoms that have been inaudible, *invisible*. It hears challenges to the dominant human rights discourse, whose frames have *excluded the knowledges of women*. The *Courts of Women* repeatedly hear of the need to extend the discourse to include the meanings and symbols and perspectives of women.

*It speaks of a new generation of women's human rights.*

The Courts of Women invite us to write another history: a *counter hegemonic history*, a history of the margins. The *Courts of Women* are a journey of the margins: a journey rather than an imagined destination.

A journey in which the dailiness of our life proffers possibilities for our imaginary, survival and sustenance, for connectedness and community. For the idea of imaginary is inextricably linked to the personal, political and historical dimensions of community and identity. It is the dislocation expressed by particular social groups that makes possible the articulation of new imaginaries. These social groups, the margins, the global south, the south in the north, the indigenous, the blacks, the dalits, the women are beginning to articulate these *new imaginaries*.

The construction of these imaginaries occur when stable structures of meaning are breaking: the existence of antagonism and dislocation are necessary to the emergence of new imaginaries.<sup>5</sup>

The peasants in Chiapas, Mexico, describing their *new imaginary* explain their core vision in their struggle for their livelihoods and for retaining their life worlds. And in their profound and careful organisation, in their political imagining and vision do not offer clear, rigid, universal truths; knowing that the journey is in itself precious, sum up their vision in three little words: *asking, we walk*.

The asking in itself challenges master narratives, masters' houses, houses of reason; universal truths, of power, of politics.

The *Courts of Women* invite us to *dismantle the master's house*; and as the poet Audre Lorde says the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. There is an urgent need to challenge the centralizing logic of the master's narrative implicit in the dominant discourses –of class, of caste, of gender, of race. This dominant logic is a logic of violence and exclusion, a logic of civilised and uncivilised, a logic of superior and inferior.

*This centralising logic must be decentered, must be interrupted, even disrupted.*



The *Courts of Women* speak to this disruption; to this trespass.

The Courts of Women, to borrow the title of Fatima Merinissi's book, are our *Dreams of Trespass*.

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Palestine Legislative Council, was invited to deliver the Opening Address at the World Court against Racism at Durban, South Africa at the NGO forum, World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance on August 30, 2001.

An excerpt from the keynote speech:

*The World Court of Women against Racism has dared to storm the bastions of power and to give a hearing to the disempowered.*

*Thank you for defying the darkness of racism and hatred to shed light on the invisible victims: thank you for challenging the master narrative and providing a forum for the authentic narratives of the silenced to enable them to gain mastery over their lives.*

The *Court of Women* is a tribute to the human spirit: in which testimonies can not only be heard but also legitimised. The Courts provide witnesses, victims, survivors and resisters not only validating their suffering but also validating their the hopes and dreams that they have dared to harbour.

*Through resilient testimonies received by the Court, we see that women's human rights cannot be privatised, individualised or domesticated either under national or international law. Current trends in the economic and political arenas maintain the old masculine paradigm, which favors consumption, exclusivity and militarism. This is our greatest challenge. To replace the old paradigm not with a new paradigm but with the first paradigm - the paradigm of the feminine. Women from traditional matrilineal cultures have kept the knowledge needed to return balance to the world in which we live.*

*The indigenous women's worldview stands in stark contrast to the patterns of globalization. Our traditional grandmothers recalled the original instructions of the Creator - to live as a guardian of the sacred earth, honoring all life forms.*

*We must return to the path of our grandmothers, walking in the vision of our cultures.*

Mililani B. Trask, Hawaii; Member of the Jury: Nga Wahine Pacifika, Pacific Court of Women, Aotearoa, September 1999 and World Court of Women against War for Peace, Cape Town, South Africa, 2001.

we need new stories for our times.  
even new story tellers.

we need new myths, magic and mystery.  
we need to find *new spaces for our imaginaries*.

gathering subjugated knowledges, seeking ancient wisdoms  
listening to the many voices from the margins, speaking  
listening to the many more, unspoken  
remembering our roots  
knowing our wisdoms  
grown from legends  
written on the barks of trees  
woven on the insides of our skins  
searching for the river beneath the river  
of paths yet to be found  
of ancient ways, of new ways,  
of forgotten and future ways.

Listening to the earth

Listening to woman as she weaves into her *razai*\* worlds  
of wisdoms; creating new meanings, new metaphors, keeping children  
warm, making the depths of old wisdoms, visible

Listening to the song of the wind.

\* Margoum in Arabic = Quilt

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Note: **Towards a New Political Imaginary** was updated after the World Court of Women against War, for Peace and therefore weaves together many more voices that spoke in a subsequent Court that followed in August 2001 - **The World Court of Women Against Racism** organised by El Taller and AWHRC in collaboration with a number of organisations during the World Conference Against Racism held in Durban, South Africa.



## *A Prologue:*

### **The Decentering of Destruction *Of Wars and Homelessness in the Twentieth Century***

*The problem of the refugee is a symptom of the uprootedness or homelessness of the modern age. It is a phenomenon of the era of nation states and the international political economy and it is a problem not insofar as the refugee is denied a homeland but insofar as he or she is denied the possibility of establishing a home. (Hannah Arendt)*

The refugee, a symbol of the permanent other, the outsider is also too the symbol and symptom of the wars of this century. Wars that have created a homelessness whose desolate depths are immeasurable.

The two world wars; the pogroms against the ethnic and political *other*; the various holocausts including against the American and Mayan Indians, the Armenians, the Jewish and of recent times the Cambodian, the Palestinian and the Rwandan; the Stalinist and Maoist purges; the more than forty forgotten wars since 1945; have together succeeded in exterminating almost 200 million people. A demonic destructiveness that has not only killed individuals, but also communities, cultures and worldviews. The scale and depth of this violence has been made possible only through the universalisation of an institution specific to our violent times – that of *modern wars*.

Wars that have changed forever the contours of the terrain and the battlefields that they earlier occupied; the weapons they deployed, the victims they vanquished, the victors they valorised. For in the new globalised world order, wars are no longer local and therefore limited in *scope* and *logic*. They are universal and global in *reach* and in *reason*.

For while wars and violence have been part of every human society in all times, *modern war* as a specific institution that evolved in Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth century, was intimately bound with the evolution of the modern state – the *centralised, rationalised, hierarchically ordered, territorialised modern state*. The establishment of standing armies under the control of the state was an integral part of the monopolisation of legitimate violence that was intrinsic to this state.

*“State interests became the legitimate justification for war, supplanting concepts of justice, jus ad bellum, drawn from theology. Modern war therefore as it developed in the nineteenth century involved war between states with an increasing emphasis on mobility and an increasing need for rational organisation and scientific doctrine to manage these large conglomerations of force.”*  
( Mary Caldor)

Gabrielle Kolko in his work on twentieth century warfare argued that wars are always started by a "*handful of men who suffer from socially sanctioned madness*". A madness however that is backed by the deadly and deathly combination of "*mass production, mass politics and mass communications that is harnessed to mass destruction*." For the violence of modern wars is also rational, clinical and limitless. Thanks also to science and technology that have helped create these weapons of mass destruction – chemical, biological, nuclear.

*Weapons that spare nobody. Not even the unborn child.*

Weapons that are deployed to not only to destroy or to dominate a people or a country but to legitimise the logic of militarisation and violence as *a way of life*.

For the violent ethic of militarisation is insidious – creeping into every crevice of our cultures, militarising our politics through militarising our minds. And so while the highly developed societies of the West carrying the burden of a 500 year old genocidal record in the South, get increasingly brutalised from within, we see a similar pattern repeating among the culture of *victim* societies "*eager to mimic those they consider more wealthy, powerful and successful, possessing the normal pathologies that go with success, including high levels of everyday violence*." (Ashish Nandy)

The ethics of traditional warfare have all but crumbled under the onslaught of this new ideology of war and militarisation that knows no barriers of gender, class, race or age; or infact of the *combatant* and the *non-combatant*. The increasing targeting of civilians, child soldiers, women inducted into the military, women at the forefront of many fundamentalist movements, symbolise the death of peace as a way of life.

It would seem that there are no limits to destruction. Despite all and any Treaties and Conventions – which only help to sustain the self-serving rhetoric of *peace* among the newly created *international community*, a community that apparently repulsed by the destruction caused by the two world wars tried to create alternative economic focal points of power through which people would progress and prosper. But commerce and economic interdependency that this international community in its wisdom thought would reduce wars and create conditions for peaceful coexistence has ultimately created the *military industrial complex* that fuels and sustains deliberately created conflict situation- both between and within states.

*For peace is not good business. War is.*

And nobody knows this better than the new global warlords who seek profit and power through the marketing of violence and unrest. The arena of conflict is no longer the first world where all the wars have ceased to be fought. They have been exported to the more hospitable climes in the Third World where multiple identities and communities have survived together for centuries, despite and through their differences. Not any more. For they have become the more *profitable killing fields*. Wars in the name of nationalism, fundamentalism, communalism, ethnic cleansing, racism, apartheid. Violent wars being couched in the language of culture specific identities which are infact being asserted in the dominant cost calculating logic of the secular and rational national state system that seeks not only to *nationalise* but also *militarise* religions, faiths and cultures.



*The ultimate decentering of destruction.*

### **The Invisibilisation of Violence : Of Wars and the Eternal Battle of Good Over Evil**

In the logic of this nation state system, wars no longer even need to be displayed as overt acts of visible violence. For by being encoded into a model of militarised governance that has institutionalised and legitimised *hyper masculinised violence*, by being embedded into the very structures of our society- the violence of wars can even be rendered invisible. Wars are no longer being fought with the *primitive* objective of territorial domination and control but with the more *civilised* goal of development and progress, of human rights and democracy; of law and order and of course of maintaining national security. The last having received a new lease of life after September 11, 2001 and the *international war against terror* by the new global peacemaker and policeman- the United States of America.

It is not a coincidence that the President of this nation, spoke of this war as that of *good* against *evil*. Since the wars that America and its allies in the North have fought have always been between good and evil. The face of good ofcourse remaining unchanged through the centuries. *Good* as that embodied in the *universal* values of European Enlightenment that brought in the rational light of *civilisation* to drive away the darkness that blinded all other cultures; values today being single handedly protected and promoted by America that carries the burden of being the worlds only surviving super power and the protector of *the way of life* and therefore on whom the mantle of global leadership falls not too lightly; *The American way of life* that the former President Bill Clinton, said was *non negotiable* when he was speaking at the Rio summit on Environment.

The face of evil has ofcourse undergone transformation depending on the politics of the time.

In the first phase of its occupation of the Americas, Europe focused on exterminating the Native Americans and the indigenous peoples of Central America. Ingenious methods were used, like that invented by Lord Amherot who in the French Canadian wars of the 1770's exterminated most of the Canada's natives Indians by charitably offering them blankets infested with the small pox virus. Europe then turned its attention to the continents of Africa and Asia that it sought to convert and control through the violent project of colonisation that it sought to respectably garb in the guise of a *civilising mission*. A violence that was sought to be sanitised by respectable scholarship in ethnography, anthropology, eugenics, developmental psychology and socio-biology. After enslaving the Blacks and civilising whoever was left in its own image, Europe sought to further secularise and sanitise its *cause* during the two world wars. If in the First World War when the modern nation state gained its first flush of legitimacy, patriotism seemed sufficiently powerful to demand sacrifice in the name of King and Country, the secularisation process took further root in World War II- where the battle was that of democracy and/or socialism against the evil of Nazism and fascism.

Both times what continued to be at stake was *the way of life*.

Evil got further secularised in the Cold War era when it was embodied in the ideology of communism. In this righteous battle of *freedom* over *authoritarianism* few regions of the world were left untouched.

The invasion of South Vietnam and the experiment with Agent Orange that killed a few million and maimed generations to come; the extensive terror operations against Cuba from the early 1960's that continues till today through the sanctions; the operations against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua through the 1980's; the support of the racist rulers of South Africa and the Zionist rulers of Israel whose genocidal policies against the Palestinians continue to be condoned; the assassination of Nasser in Egypt and of Patrick Lumumba in the Congo; the killings of 200,000 Mayan Indians in Guatemala; the violent balkanisation of former Yugoslavia, in which was reborn yet another weapon of war that targets very specially the women – gynocide or rape as a strategy for ethnic cleansing.

The killings in total of two and a half crore civilian people all over the world since 1947 in overt and covert operations of the CIA is perhaps *the price worth paying* by the world's only surviving superpower to protect *this way of life* even while maintaining, by the way, global domination. As also the death of 500,000 Iraqi children as stated by Madeline Albright when justifying the cold blooded violence unleashed by another weapon of mass destruction – that of economic sanctions.

*"It was a hard choice but we think the price is worth it"*, she said.

And these are but a few instances that give an indication of the human cost of such *just* wars, the scars of which it seems will never heal. This ofcourse does not take into consideration the horror of a Hiroshima when the Hydrogen bomb was dropped by America not only to crush Japan, but also to conduct an experiment using human as guinea pigs; as it did when it tested nuclear weapons against the indigenous people of the Pacific in 1957. Remember the jelly babies of Micronesia who had no voice and no form; and who could therefore not speak out or gather global consensus on America's inhumanity and barbarism?

This new just war against the *evil* of terrorism is perhaps the most *secular* war yet in which the universalisation of *the way of life* is complete. Despite the overtly racist prophecies of Samuel Huntington who claims to have foreseen the conflicts in the twentieth century as moving towards a *clash of civilisations* where superpower patrons are to be recreated on a *cultural* rather than an *ideological* basis when he said that the dominant fault lines will run between the West and either Islam or Asia. For this war has also legitimised to an unprecedented degree the terror of a racist war. All foreigners, aliens, minorities particularly of Arab origin in any country are viewed as potential terrorists with little checks against the state machinery be it the police or the military to curtail or hold them responsible for their well known excesses. Those who seek to question the ethics and morality of such a war, its objectives, targets, victims and consequences will be viewed as *anti national, unpatriotic and a threat to the sanctity of the sovereign nation state system*.



And never before has there been such a global consensus on any system.

Cultural nationalism, racism and xenophobia have received a new lease of life even as *universal democratic principles* die a quiet death in the convenient cacophony against terror. For this war is giving new legitimacy to more culturally specific, home grown intolerances that are struggling for global recognition and approval.

For instance the ideology of *Hindutva* or *Hindu Cultural Nationalism* in a highly diverse and disparate society like India for whom this international *crusade* against terror could not have been better timed. A time when it seeks to legitimise its own *Dharmayudh* (holy war) against the resident terrorist – the *minorities* – the Muslim, the Christian, the faithless Hindu and all those unpatriotic elements who refuse to fit into the homogenising ideal of a *Hindu Homeland* called *Hindu Rashtra*.

And all this while dominant elements within the Islamic world are attempting to violently homogenise themselves from within only so that through their own *Jehad* they can present the face of a unified global faith to a faithless world.

In the modern cost calculating rational world where religion has been violently uprooted from its moorings in faith and spirituality and pressed into the service of the Nation State and Nationalism, *crusades*, *jehads* and *dharmayudhs* and all such holy wars and *fault lines* are nothing but politically expedient, economically viable, culturally manipulative enterprises that are locked together in a deathly embrace for hegemony, control... and finally death.

*The marketing of faiths in the global market of religions.*

### **The Genocidal Standard of Living: Of Poverty and the War against Subsistence**

In times when war is state terrorism being perpetrated by the proponents of this new world order that is ruthlessly committed to an ideology of development, scientific rationality and national security, we see also the birth of another silent if equally racist war – *the war against subsistence*. For this new world order has legitimised not only war as we know it, but also a genocidal *standard of living* that has been evolved by an exclusive minority, that is displacing and destroying the *living standards* of a majority. By doing so it has not only destroyed a way of life and living that was sustainable for all, but also those who are *incapable of achieving this standard*. And so was born the most invisible and yet the most genocidal of modern wars – the war of poverty. *A war in which the most permanent way to get rid of poverty is to get rid of the poor*. A war that has also created an exclusive *over consumptive paradise* from which the *other* can only be a permanent exile or a perpetual migrant/refugee.

A paradise being run by a regime of Intellectual Property Rights in which as Vandana Shiva says, the older forms of exploitation caused by the *landlords* are being replaced by the *lifelords* who are seeking to patent all forms of indigenous life worlds and life visions that are being driven to the edge of extinction. A regime being driven by the diktats of a market economy that is violently commodifying all aspects of life and living. One therefore that creates a world in which the *worthless* have to be evicted to make room for the *worthy*.

For instance, in India , about 33 million people, about 60% of them tribal and dalit, have been displaced only by Big Dams alone in the last fifty years. As Arundathi Roy states *"the millions of displaced people in India are nothing refugees of an unacknowledged war. But we like the citizens of White America and French Canada and Hitler's Germany, are condoning it by looking away. Why? Because we are told that it's being done for the sake of the Greater Common Good. That it's being done in the name of Progress, in the name of the National Interest. Therefore gladly, unquestioningly, almost gratefully, we believe what we're told. We believe that it benefits us to believe."*

Hannah Arendt was prophetic. For the last century has birthed a new world order which by its exclusive Darwinian logic can be home only to the favoured few, rendering the rest refugee, the permanent *other*, who is not only refused a homeland but denied a dwelling – *the possibility of even establishing a home*.

*I come from there and remember  
I was born like everyone is born, I have a mother  
And a house with many windows  
I have traversed the land before swords turned bodies into bouquets  
I come from there, I return the sky to its mother when for its mother the  
Sky cries, and I weep for a returning cloud to know me  
I have learned the words of blood-stained courts in order to break the rules  
I have learned and dismantled all the words to construct a single one  
Home*

Mahmoud Darwish



### **The Violence Within Us: Of Peace and Justice in the Time of War**

What therefore does peace, justice and healing mean in times when war and violence is taking newer and more grotesque if invisible forms? What does peace and security mean to the lives of entire communities of people that are being determined by concepts of national security and national interests that have redrawn borders and boundaries; that have recreated identities and ideologies; that has militarised politics by militarising and masculinising minds?

What does justice mean to peoples whose basic rights to be human have been denied by legitimised and institutionalised forms of discrimination like apartheid, racism, casteism, colonisation; a people who are denied even their memories, their myths?

What does healing mean to communities who have lived together for centuries despite disparate identities that have today become violent signposts for political mobilisation, creating permanent barriers of fear and xenophobia?

What does peace, justice and healing mean for the women of different cultures and communities who can never speak of the unspeakable violences perpetrated on them in times of conflicts and wars since these are violences that have been relegated to the personal and the private realm; since genocide and gynocide have become legitimised ways to war.

Can any of the new conventions, treaties, tribunals and commissions that are birthed from within this new world order and which speak of peace, justice and security, be really able to break the logic of modern wars in order to refind peace as a way of life?

Even as we seek to understand the roots and the context for war and violence in our times, we need also to understand the *full might of the violence that resides within us*. As Ashish Nandy says “ *We do not feel overburdened by the death of millions we have killed in this century because in each case we have carefully chosen institutional and individual scapegoats, who, by themselves, are made responsible for the genocide : Hitler, Stalin, American hegemony, the military industrial complex, capitalism, fundamentalism, fascism, colonialism and neo-colonialism and so on. We do not feel that the blood of millions is on our hands because we do not believe that our ideas of social engineering, evolution, progress, education and development are complicit with our various versions of contemporary Satanism.* ”

And it is this complicity that needs to be understood and challenged at the deepest level if we need to move towards more relevant and rooted notions of peace, truth and justice.

**Madhu Bhushan**

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# World Court of Women against War, for Peace

March 6 - 9, 2001

## *The Highlights*

*The World Court of Women against War, for Peace was held on March 8, 2001 at the Oliver Tambo Centre in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. The Court comprising of over 4000 women and men from different provinces of South Africa and different regions of the world listened to forty women as they spoke their testimonies of pain and power, survival and strength.*



*The testimonies were heard in five sessions: Wars as Genocide, Wars Without Borders, Wars Against Civilisations, Wars Against Women and the Gathering of Spirit (Voices of Resistance). Each Session was preceded by a powerful and poetic visual testimony and the testimony of Expert Witnesses – both of which combined to give the political context to the personal testimony.*

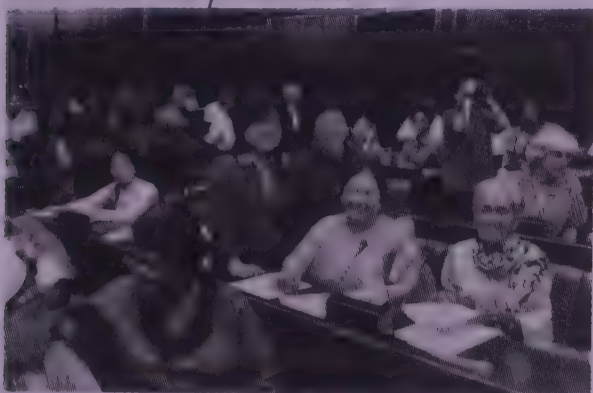
*The testimonies were received by a Jury who, as a Council of Wise Women and Men, at the end of the long day of listening, gave their own special insights into the wars of this century.*



*President Nelson Mandela sent special greetings to the women wishing that the World Court of Women would find new ways to make wars and the violence against women unthinkable. Archbishop Desmond Tutu came personally to bless the Court and explained how women speaking at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission spoke mainly of the pain in the lives of their men and rarely of their own. The Courts of Women he said are an essential space to listen to the voices and visions of the women.*

*The Court was formally opened on March 6, 2001 at the Parliament of South Africa in Cape Town. Central to the opening were the Unsung Sherones of the Apartheid Era – a panel of speakers including Ivy Gcina, Lydia Kompe – Ngwenya, Mildred Lesila, Bernadette Nenbe, Nana Mnandi and Rita Nzanga. Each of them through their own personal stories of resistance to apartheid spoke of the silent and silenced role of women in the struggle against one of the most dehumanised yet legitimised institution of racism. They spoke their stories of lost sons, murdered husbands, poverty, detention, war zones and harassment.*

*Central to the opening were also voices like that of Winnie Mandela, Fatima Meer and Albertina Sisulu and several other women from all over the world. At least for a few hours it seemed that women had indeed taken over the parliament.*



*The Opening was followed by a series of Roundtables that were held from 6 March to 7 March. By focusing on the cutting edge and critical issues of our times they helped not only to prepare the context but also receive the text and testimonies of the Court with more depth and understanding. The Roundtables were integral to the World Court of Women and its methodology that seeks to weave the objective reality with the subjective testimonies of women; the personal with the political.*



*While the World Court of Women and the Roundtables that preceded it were held from March 6-8, 2001 there were a number of events organised around it that sought to reach out to the public of Cape Town and include them in the experience and issues of the Court through creative forms of interaction. The events included a sacred journey to Robyn Island very specially with the women who would bring their testimonies to the World Court of Women, Testimony through Art, a Quilt exhibition; Lines of Violation, an art installation on comfort women, a festival of films on war, Women in Black and the Caravans of Women. While the first four events were held simultaneous to the Court, the Caravans of Women were held in different countries and regions on the months prior to the court as part of the preparatory processes.*



# Programme

March 8, 2001

Oliver Tambo Centre, Khayalitsha,  
Cape Town, South Africa

Women Drummers invite us to enter the Court of Women

## Opening Story

*Unkulunkulu the Sovereign One*

The Tswana Shamanic drum rhythms, sound and words tell the story

*The Mother Project*

Woman Praise Singer to bless the day

Welcome and Introduction to the jury members:

Silvana Dantu

Mennuna Zvezdec

Madhu Bhushan

*On behalf of International Co-ordinating Committee*

Official Opening: Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge

*Senzeni Na, What have we done?*

Choir

Lighting of the *Diya* [lamps]

Opening Ballad

*Memories are our lamps in the darkness*

*Towards a New Political Imaginary: The Courts of Women*

Corinne Kumar

*Testimonies*

*Malibongwe*

Choir

*Testimonies*

Closing Ceremony

*Children, lights, African Mandala*

Women testifiers, Jury



*We are the fire of time*

*We are the women*

## *The Opening Story:* **Kwesukesukele**

*uNkulunkulu, the Sovereign Spirit, who lived on top of the Holy Mountain, Intaba Yencwewe, felt troubled by what she saw on Earth. Her big heart thumped so hard and irregularly that the Earth Spirit was heard rumbling unhappily to express her pain caused by the lack of wisdom which led to the severe abuse and exclusion of women.*

*And the Sky above was enraged and it shifted and moved in the form of the darkest, biggest, blackest storm clouds ever seen, for she was in pain caused by the madness of poverty and violation of women's rights.*

*The Sea jumped up and down and swayed sideways in the form of the biggest waves ever seen. Their strength and power was overwhelming to all those who saw them. She was expressing her tears of trauma and anguish at the senseless loss of women's lives.*

*The Mountains also rumbled and released fierce volcanic lava that scorched, burned and reduced all in its path. The rising sparks summoned bolts of lightning sending flames that consumed the rich and the poor, the big and small, the green and the purple, solid and liquid. She was ablaze with pain caused by the cries of those women killed and mutilated and taken into slavery.*

*Throughout the world the animals had felt the pain of the Earth, the Sky, the Waters and the Fires and they came to plead with uNkulunkulu, the Sovereign One, to calm the elements. But uNkulunkulu, the Sovereign One, said that the hurt and the sorrow that gripped the people's hearts had caused them to shed such bitter tears that the salt in their tears had bonded with the elements and had become solid like the rocks and the healing essence of the elements was trapped in the Rock and could not escape.*

*uNkulunkulu, the Sovereign One, said to the animals, "Only a creature who possesses the Essential Powers of Healing and Transformation, Fertility and Nourishment, Vision and Magic, Regeneration and the ability to find Inner Strength will set the Elements free."*

*All the animals went back to their lands to seek out a Guardian for the Powers. The Snake from the West became the Queen of Water, identifying with the qualities of Healing and Transformation.*

*The Cow from the North became Earth Mother, identifying with the qualities of Fertility and Nourishment.*

*The Eagle from the East became the Queen of the Skies, identifying with Vision and Magic.*

*And the Dragon from the South became the Fire Goddess, identifying with Regeneration and Inner Strength. Empowered with these energies they created individual Seasons in which each element reigned supreme. This created balance in the world.*

*Each year the Guardians gathered to observe, to change and to heal the world. They invited the many peoples of many lands to come together and share their stories, to share their pain, their sorrow, their fears and to tell of their personal journeys. The Guardians blessed them with the energies of the Elements and gave them strength.*

*This is why we need to remember, whenever the Earth rumbles: Stand firm. Whenever the winds blow: Know that the spirits are carrying your messages and be hopeful. Whenever you see the Sea jump: It is cleansing you of your pain. Whenever the fire burns: It is a reminder that regeneration is on its way.*



## Nomzamo Winnie Madikizela - Mandela\*



I consider this World Court of Women against War, for Peace of prime importance, so much so that I have interrupted my current tour of the United States to be with you at this opening meeting. I have to return to the States after my address to continue my unfinished commitments there. I will therefore not be able to participate in this Court beyond this meeting and I regret that very much.

I see from the programme that there are amongst us women from all quarters of the world and I welcome them to our country. I welcome in particular those women who have come from the current and recent war zones of our fragmented world, women from North and Central Africa, women from Bosnia and Palestinian women debarred from their own homeland who are fighting for the restoration of their beloved country and return of their land, their fields and their homes to them. Our hearts go out to these women and we declare our solidarity to them - to the Bosnian women who have been raped in the most brutal manner, a manner unprecedented in human history. Nazi-like brutalities at the hands of Israelis, the victims of the prototype Nazism. The world recoils at the excesses of Israeli violence as it did at the excesses of apartheid violence and Hitlerite violence.

If the human destiny is for the victims to become perpetrators, then woe is the human race, woe is peace. Fortunately there are also examples of victims who become redeemers. Our own country is an example of this. It is at the behest of the ANC, voted into power primarily by the African people, the prime victims of apartheid, that we have today a government that has extended democracy to all South Africans, black and white, the minorities and the majority; to both the former victims and the oppressors. Not revenge, not violence against the brutalisers of the past but reconciliation is the foundation of our new democracy.

\* Opening speech in Parliament Cape Town, South Africa March 6, 2001

We are a country impregnated with racism - we are struggling against that racism embedded in the psyches of our former oppressors who today are our fellow compatriots. Racism breeds violence - we have known this in our country, and we have known it in Nazi Germany. Racism is fundamentally groupism; that satanic intervention which violates the unity of the human race under the presidency of God, and fragments it hierarchically into those who will receive and those who will not, those who will be empowered and those who will be disempowered. The satanic system divides the world into the rich and the poor, the First and the Third. It breeds ethnocentrism so that only your group is deemed to have the right to accumulate wealth, inherit land, and will dominate and rule, and all those outside are discriminated, isolated and dehumanised. Ethnic cleansing is one diabolical offshoot of ethnocentrism. This is perhaps the worse of all human diseases.

Racism is rooted in ethnocentrism, the attitude that my group is the most deserving and set on this earth to enjoy all its bounty at the expense of all other groups. It is the cause of all divisions, all violations of human rights and human dignity. It is the cause of racism and casteism suffered by the Dalit women of India, together with their families and communities, at the hands of the upper castes who consider themselves superior and who outcaste and dehumanise Dalits.

We women of South Africa, who contributed significantly to defeat apartheid, fought the battle not only on behalf of our gender, but on behalf of our husbands and our sons and brothers, on behalf of our families and our communities. Ours was not a battle that confined liberation to women alone, because we knew that to liberate a part of the whole is no liberation at all.

During the apartheid era, which consumed most of our lives, we were confined to our native reserves and not allowed into the urban areas, except with a pass. If we were found in the urban areas without a pass, we were imprisoned. We never got those passes as a matter of fact. We were subjected to the Influx Control Act. The reserves were impoverished, without hope. Development, wealth, jobs were in the urban areas. We had to overcome passes to liberate ourselves. We, women of South Africa, took the initiative in fighting passes, not only for women, but for all the black people chained by passes. We are now able to engage with our sisters universally and it gives us special joy to host you, and to host an international conference of women.

I would commend our liberation movement to all the women of the world who are engaged in freeing our world from the scourge of war, who want to win peace for humanity.



In our negotiations with the Nationalist government we agreed to accept the apartheid bureaucracy; simultaneously we undertook to improve the race and gender balance in employment. This has created considerable tension. One cannot keep in place the old civil service made up by and large of male Afrikaners and simultaneously reform its composition. The solution has been to offer handsome retrenchment packages which have not only been a serious drain on our coffers, but have also had disastrous results in some departments, in particular the education, where huge state investments in highly trained teachers has been lost.

Retrenchment has often meant that those with greater competence have been the first to go, leaving the bureaucracy in the hands of the less competent, both in terms of the old and new recruits. Gender equality has often meant more jobs for white women, black women benefiting little in the process.

We have one of the highest representations of women in parliament in the world and women are apparent at all levels of government; has this made a difference to the lives of women in civil society? Are they securer? Safer? Less dominated by men? More empowered?

We will realise democracy only when our people are empowered to exercise it, and for that they need education, employment, and land rights. Uppermost and vital to our development and the development of our country, are our economic interests. We have to liberate ourselves from the dependency syndrome for therein lies our dignity and our self-confidence. We will never be proud as women or as a people until we see ourselves as living on our own steam, our own labour, our own enterprise. We must build our own resources. We must investigate ways and means of doing so and leave no stone unturned. We must bring together our imagination and initiative and work out projects both in the urban and rural areas, to not only sustain ourselves, but to go beyond that, to save and create our own capital. The source of all capital is labour. The source of the capitalist's capital, is not capital, but the labour he exploits with that capital is the source of all capital.

We women are the fundamental labourers of our economies, the world over - unfortunately we rarely see our labour transformed into capital. We must organise our labour, in small units, and combine it into a force that translates into savings, that is capital to help raise the standards of our families.

While our prime focus is on eliminating poverty and misery from the world, society and thereby to bring freedom and relief to all humanity, we cannot overlook the special discriminations that women suffer as women. These discriminations are deepening and expanding.

AIDS is a disease to which women are more vulnerable because they are far less in control of the sexual act. They are often the passive recipients of men's sexual advances, their subordinate and dependant relation to men, even their husbands, depriving them of exercising their own will in the matter.

We have to put our full weight behind the campaign to save our environment, so that we may save our world. Our respective governments deserve our support when they promote the welfare of the people. At the same time we must be ever vigilant and ensure that our governments work for the people.

While the South African government is a people's government, the vast majority of South Africans, particularly the African people and more specifically, rural Africans, have gained very little in material terms. There is much talk of deliveries of water and electricity, but when viewed against the vast sectors of our population who continue to remain deprived of these most basic amenities, the deliveries appear more token than real. Those homelands that were "excised" from South Africa and therefore not covered by basic amenities in the Nationalist Republic, still remain deprived of these amenities and the rural areas are predominantly peopled with women, the men moving out to the cities, the women being left to protect the huts and the land. The women suffer the isolation of the rural areas and are far removed from centres of knowledge and from technology. They, more than the men, remain underdeveloped.

The African people are even now restricted to the reserves demarcated by the colonialists. While the Land Commission and Land Claims Court deal with restituting land taken away during the apartheid era, they have no jurisdiction over land taken away prior to that era. The result is that the only land available to the vast majority of Africans is land that remains under tribal tenure. Such land is held in trusteeship by the *amakosi* (chiefs), who rarely allocate land to women.

Research shows that where progressive *amakosi* have allocated land to women, their male neighbours have objected and made their lives difficult.

We will never regain our lost African peasantry so long as our rural Africans remain deprived of arable land fenced-off as private property and left unused by white farmers, simply to be passed on to their heirs as their fiefdoms.



To access resources, one has firstly to know that they are available, and secondly know how to access them. This in turn demands literacy and accessibility to the media. The vast majority of our population are speakers of African languages - Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho; there is very little media communication in these languages. Moreover, the larger majority of our population does not have the means to access the media, either because they cannot afford it, or they are illiterate.

Our African women form the bulk of our oppressed, illiterate and semi-literate. They are most in need of the freedom and democracy promised them in the constitution; at the same time they are the least able to access that freedom and democracy. They remain by and large ignorant of their rights and even when awareness touches them, they don't know how to claim their rights - how to access the Land Claims Court, or the Human Rights Commission, or Gender Commission.

Our new government has set up a multiplicity of safeguards against gender discrimination. Each government department has a gender focal point, there is an office on the status of women, there is the Gender Commission, we are a signatory to the UN initiated commitment to end domination against women [CEDAW]. In reality, very little of these facilities have filtered through to the rank and file of our women.

Violence is a chronic factor in South Africa. Now that political violence is settling down, criminal violence is taking over. Impoverished women, and African women in particular, are the most exposed to violence. They have neither the capacity to arm themselves, nor to form defensive units. Crime against women is soaring. Apart from rape, other forms of physical attacks on women, battering and beating, are also on the increase. How may women feel safe? Studies have revealed that where there is public outrage, where pressure groups operate, where rape courts are set up, the incidence of violence against women declines. It is not sufficient to sympathise with victims of violence: urgent action needs to be mobilised on a national scale to protect our women.

South Africa's problems in making effective deliveries are two-fold: insufficient funds and our continued dependence on the civil service we inherited from the womb of apartheid. This has resulted in a serious disjunction between legislation and delivery. We are burdened with a bureaucracy trained in racist norms and racist deliveries. The incumbents of that bureaucracy find it very difficult to understand the dynamics of black needs, more specifically the needs of African women. This hampers delivery both in pace and content, leaving our black constituencies unfulfilled and dissatisfied.



## Corinne Kumar \*



To the wonderful women of South Africa and to all our friends here,

Someone said to me earlier this morning that the women have, at last, taken over the Parliament. Friends, we come here to South Africa. From outside of South Africa, from the International Coordinating Committee and those of us from the regions that have prepared the regional Courts of Women. We come to you in South Africa as on a pilgrimage. You have been, more especially in the past 50 years, a path of light, hope and resistance to all of us the world over. We come to touch a people. To know your great spirit, to share a dream.

The people of South Africa, you in South Africa, made the institutionalised forms of racism, apartheid, unthinkable. Can we together make the violence against women also unthinkable? *No violence against women*. It's a simple dream. But it's a dream whose achievement requires enormous courage and the transformation of the thinking of societies. A dream that is totally incompatible with the dominant discourse and the dominant direction in which the world is going. But the pursuit of this dream would indeed be making our *dreams of trespass* come true.

We live in violent times. Times in which communities and collective memories are dying. Times in which the dreams have sometimes turned into never ending nightmares. Times that have collapsed the many life visions into a single cosmology, which has created its own universal truths of peace, equality and development. Truths that are proving to be inherently discriminatory, even violent. Times that have created a notion of progress and a development model that increasingly dispossess the majority, destroys whole cultures and civilisations, desecralises nature, and denigrates the women. Times in which the political spaces for *the other* is not only diminishing but also closing. The world, as you can see, is at the end of its imagination. Times in which, friends, the dominant political paradigm that determines political thinking, institutions and instruments of justice are hardly able to address this violence, which is not only escalating but also intensifying. The brutal violence against women that continues to be even more grotesque than one can imagine.

\*Opening speech in Parliament Cape Town, South Africa March 6, 2001



Times in which human rights have come to mean rights of the privileged and the powerful. The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments to which nation states are signatories, clearly elucidates that rights must be ensured to the citizens of the state. The nation states, however, are then given the responsibility of upholding this right. In the name of human rights, the nation states signatory to this declaration and human rights instruments, may then legitimise the most inhuman conditions of life. The most brutal repression of its own people, which is then seen as the internal concern of the law and order, of the national securities of the sovereign nation states. The state, my friends, is often the greatest violator, and we will hear of this at the World Court of Women. It often legitimises a particular concept of violence. The violence of poverty for instance, the violence of malnutrition, of ecological destruction, of technological terrorism, which the state through its development models, through its wars and through its weapons culture, perpetrates on its own people.

In the traditions of human rights discourse, there has been no place for women. Human Rights was born out of a specific cosmology. In this dominant discourse, violence against women in its different forms, has been viewed as personal, domestic and privatised. As Nuna told us, by privatising these crimes, they have been refused their public face and therefore their political significance. They are almost absent on the political agenda.

Desmond Tutu and the women in the TRC broke new ground by speaking of *justice without revenge*. The TRC provided women with a sacred space in which they could come together and share their pain as well as visions for a violence-free future. The Courts of Women also act as that kind of space, where we can begin to break the silence and let the women tell their painful testimonies to the world.

By privatising these crimes, women have been excluded from the main human rights discourse. Not only from its precepts but also from its practice. The parameters that have defined the discourse are almost mindless of gender. Because political paradigms that determine political thinking and modern institutions have been based on the legitimated discriminations and degradation of women.

The dominant discourse can no longer grasp the violence of our times. It is unable to find answers for the worst of genocides, the violence of female circumcision, the destruction of genetic diversity or the nuclear apocalypse.

We need to continue to produce a politics that challenges the new globalised world order and the mega theories that refuse, deny, and, in many ways, erase the other.

The Courts of Women, friends, invite us to this other discourse, to another human rights discourse and encourages us to write a counter hegemonic history. The histories of the margins, one that will not be trapped either in the universalism of the dominant discourse tied as it is to a market economy, a materialistic ethic, and the politics and polity of the nation states. Neither must it be tied to a culture specific discourse, but to one that will proffer universalisms, which will evolve from another conversation, another dialogue between civilisations. An alternative discourse that will include the knowledges and the symbols of the women on the peripheries. We need to find, friends, new intellectual baselines. We need to seek new forms of knowledge. We need to break new ground. We need to explore a new vision of universality of human rights in dialogue with other cultural perspectives of reality, but this will mean another ethic of dialogue, other notions of development, of health, of democracy, even dissent. Other concepts of power and governance, other notions of ecology, other notions of justice that will seek a justice without revenge, a truth and reconciliation with justice. This will then perhaps begin to reveal universals that challenge the master narratives of our times. Because the master narrative of our times is a patriarchal narrative. It is a narrative of war, of brutality, of exclusion. The master narrative, the *master's house* as the poet Audre Lorde tells us cannot be dismantled with the *master's tools*. We need a new political imaginary. Our imaginary has to be different. An imaginary that is infused with the values of care and concern, and of connectedness. An imaginary friends that will be feminine.

I think of Carlos Rueda in *Imagining Argentina*. He tells us that it is only *the imagination that stands between terror and us; terror makes us think and behave like sheep when we should infact be dreaming like poets*. The Courts of Women invites us to create a new political space and in this space and in this process we redefine politics.

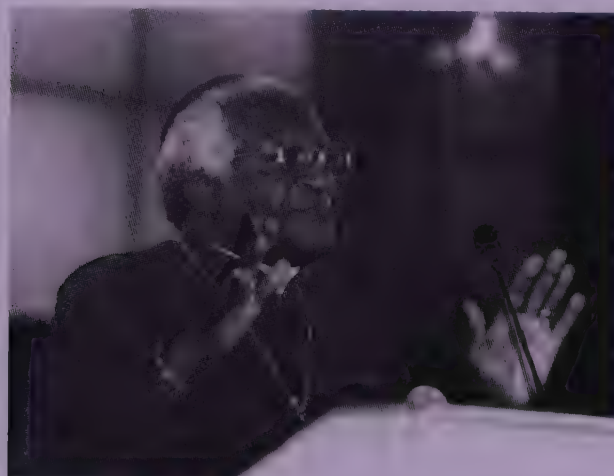
May I my friends invite you especially on behalf of the International Coordination Committee to be with us at the Oliver Tambo Center here in Khayelitsha for the World Court of Women Against War for Peace.

I thank you for listening.





## Archbishop Desmond Tutu\*



*My* dear sisters, my very beautiful mothers, it's a very, very great privilege to have been allowed to come here. I welcome you to this beautiful country. I welcome you to a country that today is a free country; I welcome you to a country that is a democratic country. I welcome you to a country that is striving to be non-racial. I welcome you to a country that is trying to be non-sexist. It is a great privilege because I want to pay a very, very warm tribute to the women of our country. And so to the many women, the mothers around the world.

Working in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission I came to realise we would never have got our freedom in South Africa without the women. And I am not saying this so that it should be regarded as being politically correct. The women have been fantastic. They have been quite extraordinary. Now, you might think, well yes he is saying this because he's got to be careful. He's in a very small minority. No, somebody I respect very much and am very fond of, the Deputy Speaker of National Assembly is reported as saying, "The main shortcoming of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was that it did not give women a chance to tell their stories."

\* Desmond Tutu, the architect of the Truth and Recociation Commission made a very special appearance to inaugurate the World Court of Women against War, for Peace at the Oliver Tambo Centre.

Well, I am very, very fond of the Deputy Speaker and would not normally want to cross swords with her, but I have to say that on that score she is a little wrong. Most of those who came to testify before the commission had a special hearing dedicated to women. They didn't even want men to be there to chair that session. They said it was going to be an all women affair. But, the Deputy Speaker was right when she said in a way the women have not told their stories. Because although you know most of them came and they testified, somebody discovered, "when men come to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission they almost always tell of what happened to themselves. When women speak, they almost always tell the story of what happened to somebody else."

Now I want to tell you why I believe we would never have gotten our freedom without the women. Some of you heard of the Guguleter Seven. Now Guguleter is one of the townships just around here. The police had tried to catch these guys who were activists; they had an ambush for them and they were killed quite brutally. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission at one point had a special hearing, and the mothers were told they might not want to watch the videos because one of them showed how the police had dragged this guy just like you drag an animal. They tied a rope around him and they pulled ... and the mothers said, no we want to see it. And so we had this hearing and the mothers and police officers were there and then this video was shown. And when the particular image of the young man being pulled by a piece of rope was shown, the mother screeched out and she took off her shoes. If she had gotten something more lethal that policeman would not be alive today. She took off her shoes and threw it at the police and our people then gathered them together. The whole thing ended. Afterwards my colleague told them "but we told you that was going to be horrible" the mother said, *"it's all right now, we are feeling OK. It's good that we should have seen this. Now we know what happened to our children."*

That's not the end. One of the black officers said he wanted to apologise to the mothers. The mothers were very angry when they came to the TRC and they sat; it was a very tense gathering. One of the mothers said, "I will never forgive you" and they all spoke very roughly. And then one of them said, *"No, my child, I forgive you"* to the police officer. *"I don't even want you to go to jail. What is the use of that?"* We were humbled. Many times in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission we encountered the incredible, incredible generosity of people who had suffered gravely; people who should by rights have been filled with anger and bitterness; people who should have said, *'We want revenge'*. It was fantastic. Fantastic women. I see one of them here. Albertina Sisulu. This is just one, this is just one.

And I come to pay very, very warm tribute to all of those mothers and sisters who are nameless; who are not famous. Let them know that women from parts of the world were thrilled to hear of their exploits and the generosity of their spirit.



What would have happened if the women and other people who had been oppressed had said, *"Now is our time. Now we want to revenge. Now we want to pay back for all that we have suffered all these many years"*. This country would now be dust and ashes. It is not dust and ashes because most of those who suffered, instead of saying, "We want the blood of those who treated us in this way. We want the blood of those who treated our children in this way". Most of them said, "Now we want to shake hands, and say South Africa belongs to all of us, belongs to all who live in this country." And the world looks on and says "You, South Africa. Phew! You are remarkable people. But let us say to you who come from other parts of the world, we would never have been free without your help.

You helped us and we thank you. We thank you; we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you that Nelson Mandela is now out of prison. Thank you that Thabo Mbeki is now our President. He used to be outside there. *We thank you that we can now walk, talk. All of us. Black and white together.* And now, we want to say to you who are going back to other parts of the world. You have discovered that you can never find security and happiness from the barrel of a gun. We used to tell the old government, hey, you've already lost man, you may have guns in the world, but you have already lost. We have been nice to you. Join the winning side; join the winning side because we know we are going to win. Why? Because our cause is just. We are not looking to oppress somebody else. *We want to be free. We want you to be free as well.*

We have given you all these many centuries and look at the mess you have done in the world. *Just get out of our way now.* It's time for women. It's time for women to say, we are not going to spend money on guns and weapons when our children are hungry, when our children have no clean water. When our children have no schools. How can we spend so much on instruments of destruction when it should be spent on these good things? The women in this country used to say to the old government "when you touch the women, you touch a rock." So tell all the men in the White House, 10 Downing Street, Tel Aviv, everywhere. ... *Touch the women and you touch a rock. You've had it.*



*It was Desmond Tutu, following his appointment as the first black Anglican Dean of Johannesburg in 1975, who immediately wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister John Vorster (the man who, as minister of justice, passed a law allowing for indefinite detention in solitary confinement without charge or trial) expressing his desire for real reconciliation with justice for all, and to peaceful change to a more just and open society. Few indeed would have dared hope that such was possible in their lifetime. Mandela had still another 15 years to serve, and the children of Soweto were yet to be murdered in order that their parents might present themselves to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to tell the world about their abiding grief.*

*But the miracle did happen, and may yet happen again, at least if the Archbishop has anything to do with it. In his own words: 'Ubuntu [African Communalism] says I am human only because you are human. If I undermine your humanity, I dehumanise myself. You must do what you can to maintain this harmony, which is perpetually undermined by resentment, anger, and desire for vengeance. That's why African jurisprudence is restorative rather than retributive.'*

**Source:** Wounded Nations, Broken Lives- Truth Commissions and War Tribunals Index on Censorship 5,1996

Opening speech made by  
for Peace, Oliver Tambo Cen



## Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge\*



Welcome. Today is International Women's Day. We have gathered in this venue, named after Oliver Tambo. He was known for his activism and belief in the liberation of women. We are gathered here to listen to the testimonies of survivors of war and gender violence. To hear the voices of resistance and hope.

Throughout history men and women have traveled great distances in pursuit of trade, profit, empire and power. Today many of us women have traveled great distances to come here. We have come here in pursuit of peace. We have done so because we can no longer trust the judgment of men who have ruled the world and have their authority to pursue profit and power. *We will leave changed by what we hear her today. I hope we will leave and change the world.*

Two years ago that great activist for peace, Bella Abzug, wrote, *"In this bloodiest century in all of human history, which began with an assassination at Sarajevo that launched a world war, was followed by hundreds of large and small wars, and is ending at Sarajevo and other war-torn countries with more mass deaths and horrors, it is now time to admit that the dominant male political leadership style has to be replaced."*

I hope you will agree with her.

It is right that we spend International Women's Day focusing on war. One year into the new millennium the problem of war continues. There are still more than three dozen major active conflicts in the world. Most of these conflicts are within states and the casualties are mostly civilians and largely women.

The nature of warfare has changed. *During the First World War 10% of the casualties were civilians. Today 90% of the casualties in conflicts are civilian.* There has been a dramatic decline of interstate wars but a sharp rise of mass violence within countries. In 1995 there were 58 armed conflicts under way around the world of which 49 were being fought over ethno-political issues. There were wars of secession and regional autonomy, conflicts among ethnic rivals for control of states and communal or clan warfare. Only one was an interstate conflict, a border dispute between Ecuador and Peru.

\*Opening speech made by Deputy Minister of Defence, Republic of South Africa to the World Court of Women against War for Peace, Oliver Tambo Centre



Prior to 1990 and the end of the Cold War, the concept of “*global security*” was closely linked to the threat posed by nuclear and major conventional weapons. Today, however this threat is intrinsically associated with the uncontrolled flows and misuse of light weapons. Portable, easy to use and widely available, this category of weapon is uniquely well suited to the wars of today. Since 1984 the trade in this category of weapons already comprised one quarter of the total value of world arms sales amounting to six billion US dollars.

In July 1999 the OAU adopted a declaration to combat the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons and also adopted the position not to recognise military regimes or governments that have come about as a result of a coup.

Women need to monitor these good intentions and ensure that there is effective implementation of resolutions.

Irrespective of the societies in which they live, the vulnerable in society are the principle victims of small arms-facilitated human rights abuses. Defenseless children, living in unstable and impoverished environments and prone to manipulation by parties in conflict have become primary victims of wars and violence. The expansion of the light weapons trade, and the conflict it feeds encourages the enforcement of child soldiers into military action.

It is estimated that 300,000 children are currently in armed service and many hundreds of thousands more are involved in various ways in war zones. The global statistics for the past decade reflect a grim picture – two million children killed, six million seriously injured or disabled, one million orphaned and twelve million made homeless. What these figures don't tell us is how many of these are girls, some as young as nine years old, who are turned into sex slaves for soldiers. *The figures don't tell us about girl soldiers.*

Women are not just passive victims. We are increasingly beginning to play a part as soldiers in different militaries involved in peacekeeping. However, if we look at the composition of armed forces throughout the world, women are a minority, and professional women and female military officers are largely absent from senior peacekeeping management levels.

In the history of UN peacekeeping there have only been two women appointed as the special representatives of the Secretary-General. They were Angela King, who served as the chief of mission in the UN Observer Mission in South Africa (UNOMSA) for sixteen months and Margaret Aristee who served as special representative to the Secretary General during the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM 11).

Throughout the world women are largely missing from the negotiations which attempt to bring peace. From Dayton to Rambouillet, Arusha to Burundi to Columbia, it is predominantly male leaders who are negotiating an end to war. At the Dayton Peace Talks there were no women present in the regional delegations. At Rambouillet there was one Kosovar woman. At Arusha, the women's delegation only had observer status. There is a serious discontinuity here as women are very active in grass root peace building organisations.

Would our presence not make a difference? In South Africa's negotiated settlement women represented 50% of each negotiating team. Was it a miracle or did women make the difference? Our constitution and our generally inclusive democracy can be attributed to the equal participation of women and men in the negotiations.

The absence of women means that a crucial perspective is missing from negotiations to end armed conflicts. Peacemaking cannot be left to the male elite. Women bring a crucial perspective that is focused, not on absolute power, but on shared power and on meeting basic human needs. A gendered perspective, however, avoids essentialising women as necessarily peaceful.

As Gordon has written of Nazi Rule: "There were many women responsible for substantial brutality and many who enthusiastically supported men's brutality" (Gordon, 1987:36).

In South Africa some white women supported white minority rule and the suppression of human rights.

The gender dimension of peace building tends to be overlooked. Activities that bring together women in defense with women in civil society assist in examining peace through a gendered lens.

For example, last year women peace activists and women in the S.A National Defence Force met for a two day seminar. They met at the Defence Intelligence Headquarters to examine their understanding of peace and their role in ending conflict and building peace in Africa. They have formed the African Women's Peace Table, and I hope that they are able to link up with the World Courts of Women.

They help us focus on the role of women in peacekeeping and peace building. Women's voices and perspectives in peace negotiations and peace building have been absent. It is essential that they be heard.

A gendered approach does not focus on women as an isolated category but on the relations between men and women. At present these relations operate to privilege men and subordinate and exclude women.



- \* A shifting of the various social meanings attached to small arms.
- \* Attempts to promote alternative values and ideologies through 'peace education' by educational institutions, trade unions, religious institutions and the family.
- \* The empowerment of civil society to participate in debates on defence and security.

An analysis of the causes of conflict in Africa reveals that issues of access and control of development resources appear to be the underlying cause for most conflicts. The relevance of development not only relates to the causes of war but also to its severe impact on the socio-economic development of a nation and its human and physical development resources. In order to achieve sustainable peace in the region, issues of economic development must be integrated into all our interventions. This requires a paradigm shift regarding how we train soldiers for peace, which would be different than the preparation for war. An alternative approach to peacekeeping on the African continent is needed. We need the implementation of development peacekeeping to create sustainable peace. Peace which is not just a silence of guns after a war, but a sustainable effort at ensuring lasting peace and prosperity.

The organisers of this event today have recognised that the dynamics of peace building mean we have to confront a whole range of very difficult issues. Among the greatest threats to peace in the world today is the proliferation of small arms, but as Michael Renner of the Worldwatch Institute has written, "There is more to policies stemming small arms proliferation than simply reducing the number of weapons. Unless war-torn societies receive sufficient outside assistance to consolidate peace, the harsh living conditions in these countries may prove fertile ground for on-going violence. Gun control efforts will be doomed if they are not accompanied by policies to alleviate the adverse social and economic conditions that can lead to violent breakdown" (Renner, 1977:8).

In South Africa the Minister of Social Development Zolo Skweyiya has identified a crisis of social disintegration. Sub-Saharan Africa is the poorest region of the world. Almost half of our people in S.Africa live in poverty. At the same time, globalisation is increasing the gap between the rich and the poor. At the global level, the ratio of average income of the richest country in the world to that of the poorest has risen from about 9:1 at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to at least 60:1 today. This pattern is unacceptable to anyone concerned with either social justice or social stability.

Armed conflict continues to destroy our world and create poverty in places like Angola, Burundi, the DRC, Kosovo, Chechnya, Iraq and East Timor. Wars in Africa continue to destroy human resources and potential. President Mbeki has stressed that "the resolution of conflicts on our continent" is crucial to the African Renaissance. It is a prerequisite for the Millennium Africa Plan.

Our Women's Court against War, for Peace is evidence of globalisation from below – a mass movement on the part of citizens all over the world who are coming together. People from 80 countries did so at the Hague Appeal for Peace in 1999, and we have women from over 60 countries here today. This is the space within which we can come together to develop a shared understanding and deepen our collective strength. As women we are demanding a massive shift in power and resources both between and within countries. The form this shift must take is clearly stated in the UN Security Council Resolution 13 25 of 31 October 2000. This is our agenda for a just, stable and peaceful future.

To quote Cora Weiss, President of the Hague Appeal for Peace, on the adoption of resolution 13 25. She is with us here today:

"Namibia held the presidency of the Security Council in October and welcomed our initiative. This experience reflects the New Democratic Diplomacy – whereby governments, the UN and civil society work together for peace and justice. This is an historic victory for women, and therefore for all humankind. Now we have to hold our Governments accountable! Teach it, preach it, and let everyone know, that Women count, at last! And hold governments accountable."

The United Nations general assembly has declared the decade 2001-2010 "Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World." Our governments have voted for that and adopted it. Let us claim it and hold them to it. Let us offer to assist them and show them how to bring it about.

I dream of a world where there is no war, no guns and no violence.

I look to Audre Lorde for inspiration in the struggle that I share with you, and I quote:

*"When I dare to be powerful - To use my  
strength in the service of my vision,  
then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."*

*(Audre Lorde)*

Finally, in charting the way forward it is important that we do so in a participatory and inclusive manner so that all of us own decisions and actions that are taken. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "The goal is as important as the means."

Amandla.





Session: I

## Wars As Genocide

*This century has seen the increasing technologisation and nuclearisation of wars that have become destructive on a genocidal scale. This session heard the testimonies of women who have borne witness to the most grotesque faces of modern warfare*

### *Visual Testimony*

#### **Expert Witnesses:**

Biljana Kasic, Croatia

Nelia Sancho, Philippines

#### **Testimonies:**

Lola Fedencia David, Philippines

Nusreta Sivic, Bosnia

Keifah Afifi, Palestine/Lebanon

Pham Thi Xuan, Vietnam

Samira Al Bayyati, Iraq

Pun Srey Leak, Cambodia

Odette Mukansore, Rwanda

Testifier from Burma

Teruko Yokoyama, Japan

Almira Matayoshi, Marshall Islands

*Comfort Woman Survivor*

*Rape/Ethnic Cleansing*

*Political Prisoner*

*Chemical Warfare/ Agent Orange*

*Depleted Uranium*

*Land Mines*

*Genocide*

*Atomic bomb survivor*

*Nuclear testing survivor*



## Biljana Kasic, Croatia

### *Expert Witness*



*Dear women, testifiers, and men among us,*

*It is women's responsibility to be with you today. All of these women's stories evoke the condemnation of oppression and the call to freedom and justice. All the women's stories, silent voices that flowed together in sublime harmony rather than disrupting each other, created discourses that broke open and transgressed the silence of the social order; silence on the genocide and holocaust, on war torture, on gang-rape, sexual violence, on atrocities. The silenced voices flowed together into a public hearing that also sought to recover the patterns of survival, women's survival and women's bonding, this sacred social contract.*

*The Court shocked the international public once again through events that have happened over this past decade. Shocked by the 1993 reports of these atrocities, in particular of the widespread rape in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a means of ethnic cleansing, the global political consciousness on how to approach such issues was faced with its own ambiguity, limitations and demands. How to address the issue of sexual violence against women within war conflict in the ex-Yugoslav countries, without claiming or questioning the power of male violence or more precisely, the patterns that enabled its continuation throughout the centuries? How to mention war rape against women in Bosnia and Herzegovina without mentioning all the rapes women have suffered throughout other wars and to avoid saying what happened to Korean, Chinese and Filipino women in Japanese military brothels during the Second World War; what is the language of pain of women in Indian society during 1947, or the brutalisation of experiences of the self that are hidden in the narratives of women from Berlin at the end of the Second World War? In only the last decade war rape has occurred in Rwanda, El Salvador, Guatemala, Kuwait, Liberia and Kosovo, among others. How to secure justice and allow women to be witness to their own rape, to preserve their dignity, inner security and to enable the support of other women?*

*The arms trade is a major cause of human rights abuses. Some governments spend more on military expenditure than on the social development, communications infrastructure and health combined.*



## The Arms Trade is Big Business

Global military expenditure and arms trade is the largest spending in the world at 800 billion dollars, annually. As world trade globalises, so does the trade in arms. In order to make up for lack of domestic sales, newer markets must be created. USA and Britain respectively do the largest and second largest businesses of arms trade in the world. Sometimes, these arms sales are made secretly and sometimes knowingly to *human rights violators*, military dictatorships and corrupt governments. For example, in 1998, 14 billion dollars worth of sales were made by the USA, a third of which went to known human rights abusers.

The military industrial complexes of the powerful countries help influence and shape foreign and military policies. Often, arms sales accompany other geopolitical interests. For example, the United States has agreed to sell to the United Arab Emirates advanced 80 F16s. The deal is estimated to be around 15 billion dollars. However, in return, the US will be able to build military bases there with improved access to the only deep-water port capable of housing carriers in the Persian Gulf. In this particular example, there are also concerns about the resulting stability in the region and the possible arms race it could start with the neighbours.

*Not only have women been the dark object of the aggressors' lust throughout the centuries but they have also been the symbols of territory among male enemies, among nations at war-time, a weapon of military strategy, a locus of humiliation of one part and the righteous revenge of the other in various armed conflicts as well as in so-called peace times. Some activists call it femicide, or, in other words genocide against the female gender.*

*During wartime, women have faced various types of violence on a horrifying scale: rape, torture, gang rape, isolation, loss, sexual slavery, disappearances, and exodus. During the period of 1992-1995 women within Bosnia and Herzegovina in ages ranging from eight to their late seventies faced gang-rape in detention camps during the invasion of towns or cities, in front of their families, or were forced into brothels to sexually entertain soldiers, and they were often threatened with death.*

*The perpetrators were soldiers, paramilitary groups, those who did ethnic cleansing. They were individuals from peacekeeping forces. The perpetrators have their names.*

*Rape is an attack against a woman's life and security. It is an extremely violent crime against humanity, and it has yet to be recognised as a crime of gender. This was what we learnt and what we argued for in the first documents addressed to the international community and to international legal authorities at the end of 1992.*

*But from that time I couldn't help thinking that women were exposed to double abuse, facing the cruelty of rape and the arrogance of the pornography and other media abuse. Namely, the rape of women has become an incredible attraction of war - the exotic side of war used in nationalistic and media propaganda of various sides, politicians, gynecologists, and military masters, and so it lasted as long as the war news was fed to the media, arousing such feelings as compassion, hate, desire for revenge etc. However, the pictures of raped women from Bosnia and Herzegovina disappeared in several months to be replaced by new photos taken somewhere else. These agents have their names.*



*Once more in the recent war in former Yugoslavia, women faced the absurdity of nationalistic ideologies, one pitted against the other, the impact of militaristic machinery and globalisation, they faced the cruel reality of devastated land and destroyed communities. Two million Bosnians were driven away, more than 100,000 Croats were left without their homes, more than 100,000 Serbs were driven out of Croatia, thousands of Albanians faced political and military torture or displacement, the Balkans became a chaotic mixture of refugees - people without their identities or with new violent identities, people who survived incredible tortures and traumas and had to continue living, people who nowadays live in divided communities against their wish or choice, without response, without clear political responsibilities, without justice, without addressing aggressors, with only a sliver of human hope.*

*The military forces showed their power by directly targeting the civilian population in all wars. The civilian population suffered substantially in the conflicts. This happened against people from Palestine, Guatemala and Chechnya. Entering the new millennium we face genocide and ethnocide of indigenous peoples, conflicts and wars, violence and potential wars, militaristic power that leads violence to its most extreme.*

*How do we hope for justice for the thousands of rape victims, how do we take responsibility beyond the judicial process, how do we demonstrate what the survivors of violence have suffered, how do we speak about the atrocities which are unspeakable, to what extent can we go on explaining female suffering, how do we create an atmosphere where the individual story will be more meaningful, how do we share experiences against complex historical wars and violent oppressions? This is what we are doing just now.*

*There are no national, geographical or historical borders when we speak of violence and genocide, but there are personal, women's, ethical boundaries that go together with anger, despair, fear and a longing for a dignified life that we should acknowledge. For this reason, we are pleading for responsibility and justice. And so, this women's framework of solidarity and resistance-this Court of Women-may just enable and support women to be heard. To be heard means the possibility to stop the very cycle of violence; to be heard means a way to break the multiculturalism of fear that exists, how to go beyond victim behaviour, how to reconcile oneself and ourselves.*

*Life without violence is a basic human need.*

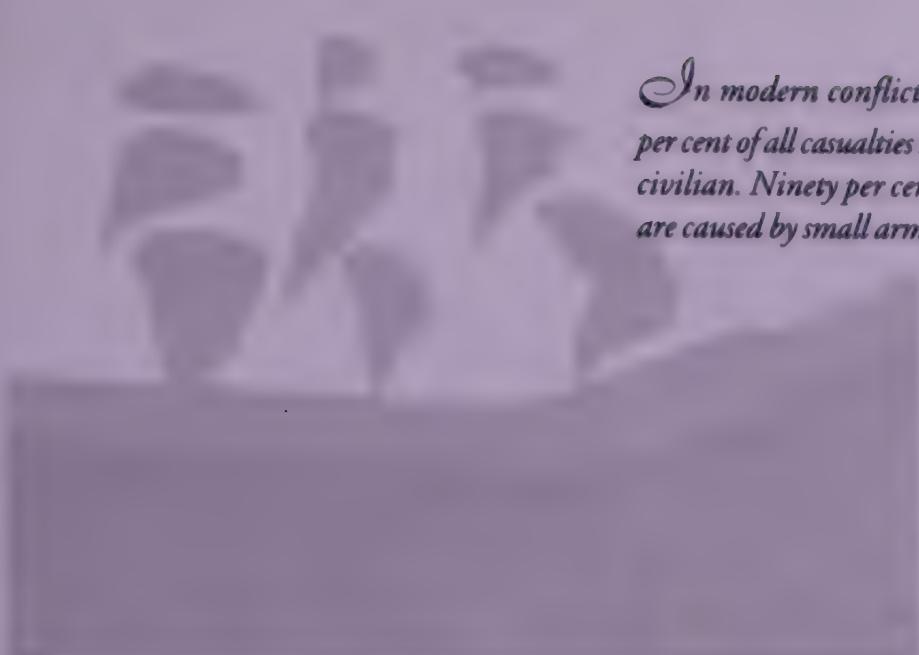
The US also sells many weapons to Turkey. These are used against the Kurds, in what some have described as the worst human rights violations and ethnic cleansing since the Second World War. The US turns a blind eye to these atrocities because they are able to set up bases in such a key geopolitical location, which allows them to spy on places in the Middle East, such as Iraq, and because Turkey will be the main receiver of oil headed to Western countries from the Caspian Sea.

The US has many arms trade related interests in the Middle East. By having pro-US monarchies at the helm and promoting policies that often ignore democracy and human rights, arms deals are often lucrative and help continue US foreign policy objectives.

The UN has even called for a creative partnership with the arms industry saying that such an arrangement would help promote greater transparency, help curb illicit arms trafficking and ensure legitimate use of the purchased weapons.









*In modern conflicts over 80 per cent of all casualties have been civilian. Ninety per cent of these are caused by small arms.*

*Levels of military spending around the world has been drastically reduced compared to Cold War levels. Apart from the United States, which, while reduced, is still close to Cold War levels. On military in general, the USA spends more than the rest of the G7 countries combined - approximately \$288.8 billion, annually. It also spends more than its enemies combined. In 1997 alone, half of USA's aid was related to military aid/trade.*



*“Industrialised countries negotiate free trade and investment agreements with other countries, but exempt military spending from the liberalising demands of the agreement. Since only the wealthy countries can afford to devote billions on military spending, they will always be able to give their corporations hidden subsidies through defence contracts, and maintain a technologically advanced industrial capacity.*

*And so, in every international trade and investment agreement one will find a clause which exempts government programs and policies deemed vital for national security. Here is the loophole that allows the maintenance of corporate subsidies through virtually unlimited military spending”*



*A US military training school, the School of the Americas, has trained many of the worst human rights violators and dictators in various Latin American countries. Some of the worst dictators and human rights abusers in the developing world have passed through the school's doors, including people like Roberto D'Aubisson from El Salvador and Manuel Noriega of Panama. The US Army maintain that the school was set up to preserve democracy.*

**Source:** Confronting the Military - Corporate Complex, Stephen Staples

Nelia Sancho, *Philippines*  
*Expert Witness*



*Dear sisters, dear friends: I thank you for the wonderful opportunity that enabled me to travel with three ex-comfort women survivors of Japanese military sexual slavery all the way from the Philippines to South Africa. It is certainly a unique and powerful experience to participate in today's World Court of Women against War, for Peace being held on International Women's Day and to celebrate it here in Cape Town, South Africa. We are grateful to AWHRC, El Taller International and the South Africa Secretariat for the huge and successful organisation of today's inspiring and highly spiritual event.*

*The past century has seen the violence of the Second World War. Its brutality and intensity are inscribed into the collective history and memories of modern nation-states and their peoples. World War II was not only a war of armed conflict; it was a genocidal war of racism. Millions of people in Asia were killed and massacred, including children who were obviously non-combatants. Colonial structures, heritage sites and cities were bombed and devastated. Innumerable horrors resulted from this war. A nuclear bomb was dropped and tested—the annihilation of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is now part of this history.*





## Military and the Sex Industry

The connection between the military and the sex industry does not require war to be currently fought, as the last thirty years in South-East Asia attest (Strudevand and Stoltzfus 1992; Troung 1990). Sexual access to women has been explicitly organised by the military for centuries, demonstrating a fundamental connection between militarism and coercive heterosexuality.

*The world then saw the eruption of more conflicts and wars after World War II – many of us are now witnesses to the occupation of Palestine and the atrocities, the killings that go with it; the Vietnam War, waged by the United States, which created the conditions for the massacre of the village people of Mylai, the rape of Vietnamese women, the destruction of the land and forests of Vietnam with the use of chemical warfare through Agent Orange. The international community also learnt of the killing fields in Cambodia and the use of landmines, which continue to ravage the people of Cambodia.*

*In today's Session I, we will be informed of the use of depleted uranium in the bombing of Iraq, the genocide of Rwanda, the fundamentalist war in Algeria, the nuclear testing in the Pacific, the militarisation and massive displacement of Burmese peoples, and the ethnic cleansing of Bosnia.*

*Many of the world's peoples continue to live today in a state of war – the victims of power and conflict. And most of them are women and children. Conflicts, war and violence are the bitter fruits of militarism. Militarism has been and still is manifested in various forms. It is in the total militarisation and nuclearisation of all nation-states in the name of nationalism and national security and the physical force these states use to implement their policies. Militarism creates an environment that accepts violence as a legitimate way to resolve conflict, control society and ensure social stability; it is an environment that depends on the identification of the **other** as the **enemy** and the massive dissemination and internalisation of military values, symbols and language that promote the acceptance of hierarchies and ideas, like **might is right**. Increasing arms build-ups in the name of **modernisation** and disproportionately huge military budgets are also products of militarism, and inherent in all of these various forms is the propagation of a dominant-submissive mode of relationship based on a strict division of gender roles with masculine as dominant, and feminine as submissive.*

*Militarism has its roots in patriarchy and profit; **war is big business**. In all these wars and conflicts, we see the marriage of militarism and violence against women. Rape is merely the violent means of perpetuating women's subservience in society, and this is excused by a militaristic culture, which expects men to get what they want through intimidation and violence.*



*Militarism and violence against women - to illustrate this, friends, I share with you a story of violence in World War II that remained one great silence. The silence remained unbroken and the crime remained hidden for fifty years. No mention was ever made about the war that was waged by the Japanese Imperial Army and government and by its emperor, specifically against the women of Asia. A most brutal form of violence, widespread and systematic, strongly racist, whose scale was not only vast but its intensity unprecedented. It denied the women the most fundamental right – the right to be human. It was a violation that totally shattered their dignity as women and as human beings. The victims of this violence were euphemistically described by the Japanese army as the **military comfort women**.*

*Some historians and researchers estimate that more than 250,000 women from Korea, Taiwan, China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, various other occupied territories, and Dutch women, were all victims of this very specific component of the war – the rape and sex slavery system instituted by the Japanese army and government in World War II. To this very day, the Japanese government hasn't owned up to this abhorrent war practice. The Japanese government has never revealed the entire story and never made a full public disclosure of the existing documentation that is in their possession, such as the written army instructions and the general policy to order the conscription of the women for forced sexual services to their soldiers. Silence surrounded these horrific crimes. Until the day the victims told their stories in public.*

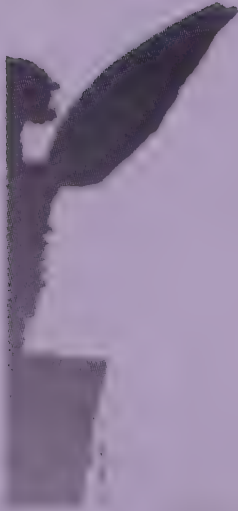
*And so the stories of the comfort women, indeed all women victims of violence, were bound to be told.*

A recent example reported in *International Children's Rights Monitor* involved the presence of UN peacekeeping troops in Cambodia resulting in a *breath-taking increase in prostitution, in part involving children*. (Arnvig 1993: 4). One health official estimated the increase in women and girls involved in prostitution in Phnom Penh from 6,000 in 1991 to 20,000 in 1992. Kane (1998: 7-9) confirms this account and notes that at least a third were minors. She provides another example in which the Italian component of UN peacekeeping forces in Mozambique not only availed themselves of the local sex industry but also became active in organising it (PP. 48-9). As in Bosnia, some of those involved are poverty-stricken, others are women and girls who have been raped by men of their own community and are *unmarriageable*. These are the most common routes into the sex industry for all women and girls, and armed conflicts make survival even more fragile. Arnvig comments: *"The tragedy of Cambodia becoming a part of this sex-market is that it comes just at a time when the country is supposedly on its way to new society after more than two decades of violence, destruction and repression ... Someone might argue: but this is not war; this is peace"* (Arnvig 1993: 6).



While the connection between the military and adult prostitution has been well documented, rather less attention has been given to the sexual exploitation of children. Kane (1998) highlights that armed conflicts and displacement of populations create contexts in which children are often separated from their families. This increases their vulnerability to exploitation and she cites cases of children having to trade sex for food in refugee and resettlement camps. She summarises a recent UN review of the sexual exploitation of children in situations of conflict. In all twelve of the case studies examined, troops from all sides were implicated in the sexual exploitation of children, and in six cases - Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Croatia, Mozambique and Rwanda - the UN peacekeeping presence was associated with an increase in child prostitution (Kane 1998: 46). As with military involvement in adult prostitution in South-East Asia, the process is extended by the emergence of civilian *sex tourism* to areas where sex with children can be bought easily and cheaply.

These repetitious patterns, which transform local, and sometimes national, economies through the use of women and children's bodies, raise serious questions about military bases, military behaviour, and the *peacekeeping* and conflict resolution roles of the UN. In the latter case, at the very least, there ought to be explicit disciplinary rules against involvement of UN troops in prostitution, and consideration ought to be given to including civilian women skilled in supporting women and children in the aftermath of sexual violence as core components of any UN team.



*The stories of the comfort women survivors have reached many corners of the world, not only in their own countries but also in places such as Vienna, Beijing, Geneva and New York, where the UN held their world meetings. The stories found their echoes in similar experiences of war and trafficking and violence of other women in other countries whose stories have not yet been told. There was the story of the Vietnamese women who were raped during the Vietnam War. There were the women raped by Bangladeshi soldiers whose stories still need to be heard. There were the Karen ethnic women raped by the Burmese soldiers on the border of Thailand; the Cambodian women raped by the UNTAC soldiers; the women raped in the former Yugoslavia, and the women raped in Somalia whose country is being torn asunder. And in the Philippines today, where the AWHRC has just concluded a women's peace caravan in the island of Mindanao, we have received documented reports of Muslim women from Mindanao being raped by government soldiers. The latter are deployed in Muslim areas to pursue the past president's policy of an all-out war against the Moro guerillas fighting for their autonomous state. It has caused massive displacement of Muslim communities. The horror, disgust, anger, anguish and pain that each woman in all of the areas has suffered is unimaginable.*

*The powerful testimonies of the ex-comfort women survivors, started by one Korean survivor in 1991, brought to light the historical truth of the organised rape and sexual slavery as practiced by the Japanese military organisation. The comfort women were organised not privately but systematically by the Japanese government and the Imperial Army, which set up comfort stations or army brothels for the soldiers. It was a clear case of state-sponsored violence against women.*



*The Japanese defence documents called them **jugun ianfu** or military comfort women. They were women in the occupied Asian territories and countries. The Japanese Imperial Army treated the women as objects to be used. The Japanese army's written instructions to all their armed forces classified the rape of comfort women as akin to the use of cannon fodder or war armaments. The case of the military comfort women involves the systematic planning and forcible drafting, abduction or kidnapping of hundreds of women in the different countries, using the entire army apparatus of Japan. It also involved the establishment, control as well as management of army brothels called the **comfort stations**. After the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the practice of systematically setting up army brothels was officially implemented in all garrisons, in places such as Manchuria, Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea, the South Sea Islands and Dutch East Indies (or Indonesia) and Malaysia. Most of the women were young girls between 11 and 20 years of age, forcibly detained and repeatedly raped. For the Korean women, many were induced by officials of the colonial Japanese government to be employed in factories with promises of good pay. All these young women left home without imagining that they would become **jugun ianfu** or comfort women for the Japanese Imperial Army. Many of the girls were so young that they did not even have any idea of sex or the meaning of it.*

*Historians estimate that fewer than 30 per cent of the comfort women survived the ordeal by the close of the war. After the war, the Japanese soldiers abandoned the comfort women. In some military outfits, the comfort women were summarily executed; others were ordered to commit suicide along with the Japanese soldiers. In other countries, they were killed in trenches. Many of them were abandoned by the Imperial Army and had to return home by themselves with great difficulties.*

*In this World Court of Women, we make a deeper reflection and analysis of the roots or origin of the policy of systematic conscription of women by the Japanese Imperial Army and government, which clearly had the mindset and intent to use, abuse and victimise the women as sex slaves.*

Resistance to their exploitation is emerging throughout South-East Asia. Redress has been demanded by hundreds of Asian women forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese military during World War II (Asian Women's Human Rights Council 1993; Shin 1996), including Filipina women, who had worked in the sex industry following the withdrawal of US troops and bases, which resulted in many women being left destitute with children of US servicemen. Finding ways to make the military accountable for the consequences of extensive sexual exploitation and taking issue with the presumed necessity of prostitution and pornography to the (presumed) heterosexual male military must be key elements in any feminist responses to militarisation.

**Source:** Wars against Women: States of Conflict Gender, Violence and Resistance Ed. Susie Jacob, Ruth Jacobson, Jennifer Marchbank.





*War and militarism are ideological and patriarchal constructs based on superiority, dominance and purity that result in putting a nation, country or group in a position of power over others. It is a male-dominated discourse of sexual violence and misapplied power. War and militarism are also based on a racial construct, which result in gross violations of human rights in forms such as ethnic cleansing, gender violence, marginalisation, exclusion, pauperisation, genocide - constituting a continual threat to peace and the healing of communities and nations. All forms of war, be it outright armed conflict, wars of globalisation resulting from inequitable power structures or wars of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, not only perpetuate but also intensify gender discrimination and provide the conditions for the escalating violence against women. Thus, the elimination of all forms of war is essential for creating peace, establishing respect for human rights and upholding the dignity and humanity of women and of all peoples and communities.*

*The comfort women survivors are still being denied recognition and reparations by the Japanese government. Their struggle for state legal compensation and a sincere official apology from the Japanese government manifests their deep desire to stop the continuing violence against women in situations of war or in times of peace. The comfort women continue to speak out against this violence. They speak out not only against the war of aggression that Japan waged in Asian countries, nor only about the Japanese government's non-fulfillment of its legal obligation to the victims, but also against all wars that make women and girls easy targets for violence and intensified oppression.*

*Today, in this World Court of Women against War, for Peace, I would like to salute the ex-comfort women survivors and all women survivors of all wars and conflicts. I speak particularly of the Filipino survivors whom we call the Lolas, our grandmothers; three of them are present today in this World Court. I have worked closely with them in the movement for women's human rights in the last nine years. They have suffered for a long time from the stigma and social rejection. They too had to confront their own negative feelings and attitudes towards themselves as a result of their victimisation. Most had lost their self-esteem and no longer had a sense of beauty and joy in their day-to-day lives. Then, one day, they each took the step of telling their stories in public, and subsequently, awakened to a new world, embraced by a women's movement in the different countries of Asia that expressed their strong support to the recovery of their human rights.*

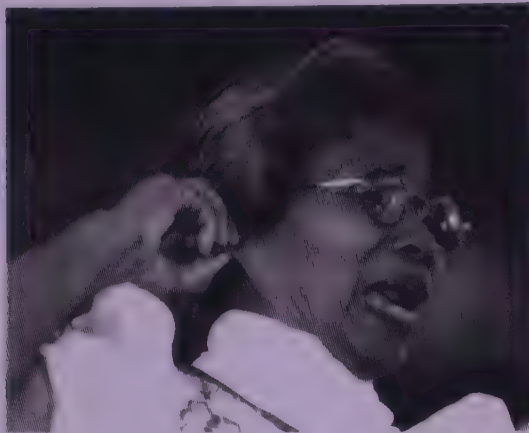
*The Lolas of the Philippines, the Amahs of Taiwan, the Halmonis of Korea, and the Dutch women victims became the women who felt renewed and empowered as they started to tap into and connect with their innate power, their courage and strength in the course of their involvement in the national and international movement to realise redress from the Japanese government.*

*Thank you, Lolas and thank you all.*

*all has been taken away, strength and love  
my body, cast into an unloved city....  
and only conscience, more terribly each day  
rages, demanding vast tribute  
for answer, I hide my face in my hands....  
but I have run out of tears and excuses*

Anna Akmatova

After fifty years it was such  
a relief to share the pain



*Testimony of a Comfort Woman Survivor  
Lola Fedencia David, Philippines*

*I was born on November 7, 1927 in Barrio Magsaysay, Dasol Pangasinan. We were three in the family and my parents were both farmers.*

*In 1941-1942, we already knew about the coming of the Japanese forces before they arrived in Dasol. My family, as well as other folks in the barrio, dug up tunnels where we could hide the moment the Japanese soldiers arrived at our place.*

*Thus, we dug up our own tunnel, which was about 10 metres away from our house. And when the Japanese came to our place in 1942, we immediately went inside the tunnel. I was 14 years old then. We put bamboo, twigs of trees and leaves over the opening to make sure that the Japanese soldiers would not find us. They never located us when they conducted their raid in Barrio Magsaysay. They conducted their zoning after two days of arrival.*

*When we knew that they had already left, we came out of our tunnels. We stayed inside the tunnels for two days. We learnt later that the Japanese soldiers went into the houses in Barrio Magsaysay; they burnt our belongings and our house when they couldn't find anybody there. Only our house was burnt. They looted food and other items from the other houses.*

*After the incident, our family decided to build a small hut about 5 metres from where our old house previously stood. After settling for two days, my grandmother and I decided to sell vegetables and bananas at the market in the town Dasol.*



## US military indifference towards comfort women

Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, and the occupation of Japan led by the US forces commenced less than two weeks later. The purpose of the occupation was *democratisation* of Japan's entire political, economic, and social system. As one of the important exercises in this process, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (usually known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal) was convened to prosecute Japanese war leaders who had instigated the war against the Allied nations and bore final responsibility for the various war crimes committed by their own forces. The tribunal, which lasted two and a half years, was presented with massive evidence of such war crimes as rape, murder, and ill treatment committed by the Japanese against Allied soldiers and non-combatants. Yet the issue of comfort women - a crime against humanity on an unprecedented scale - was never dealt with by this trial.

*On the first day we went to sell our products, my grandmother and I went on our separate ways. While I was entering the market, I saw several Japanese soldiers waving at me to come to them. It was about 8:00 in the morning and I was walking with my bilao on top of my head. I was afraid of the Japanese soldiers, so I did not go when they called. Then a Makapili, a Filipino collaborator, approached me and said, "You do not want to go to the Japanese soldiers? They will cut off your head!" I was even more afraid, so I went up to the Japanese soldiers. One of the soldiers stepped forward and slapped my face while the other soldiers watched.*

*Then the soldiers got a pail of water and forced me to drink it. When I couldn't drink it all, the soldiers threw the water over me. Then the soldier who slapped me took a knife and got hold of my ear, slicing it until it bled profusely. Then they took some rope and tied my hands behind my back. It was then that my grandmother saw me and came to my rescue.*

*It turned out that we were standing in front of the municipal hall in the town of Dasol, which had been turned into a Japanese garrison; it was located beside the public market. When I looked up, I saw many Filipinos lined up in the plaza of the municipal hall. They were being scorched in the sun. All of them had their hands tied. My grandmother's hands were also bound, and the soldiers forced us to join the line of Filipinos standing in the sun. I was crying and shouting as the wound in my ear was bleeding and hurting very much. We remained in the sun until twelve noon.*

*Afterwards, they forced us inside the garrison. I was made to cook, do the laundry and clean the surroundings. When night came, I was put in a room with four other women. It was dark in the room with only a gas lamp burning. Then the Japanese soldiers came into the room; one of them grabbed me and raped me. I tried to shout and struggle, but he put a cloth over my mouth and gagged me. After he was through, two more soldiers followed. After that, I lost sense of what was happening. I was completely weak. The other women suffered the same fate. I had not yet started menstruating at that time.*

*The next morning until noontime, I was made to stand again under the scorching sun. I spent the afternoon doing the domestic chores I was ordered to do the first day. When night came, about three to four Japanese soldiers came to rape me. They would usually come at around 9:00 in the evening, and they would rape until dawn.*

*This went on for ten days. On the eleventh day, my grandmother and I were surprised when the Japanese suddenly let us go. The reason, I later learnt, was that the Japanese soldiers found out that there were two Filipino guerillas staying in our house (the guerillas had asked my father permission to stay there and my father, though he did not want them there, could not refuse). So they set us free. While my grandmother and I were walking home, we realised that many Japanese soldiers were following us. On our way home, we passed by a house also occupied by the Japanese. A Makapili and the Japanese saw us and again forced us inside the garrison. It was about 10:00 in the morning. They made us cook for them again. I saw other women there.*

*In the evening, my grandmother, the other women and I were raped by the Japanese soldiers. I could see my grandmother being raped across the room, and I could hear her screams. In the morning they let us go, and we continued our way home.*

*Finally, we reached our home in Barrio Magsaysay. Suddenly, when we drew near, the two guerillas that were staying in our house saw the Japanese soldiers behind us and thought we had deliberately led the Japanese to them. The Filipino guerillas started firing and one Japanese fell. When the other Japanese soldiers saw one of them injured, one of them fired at my grandmother and she fell down. I tried to come to her rescue but I was in shock, and then many other shots rang out. In the midst of the fighting, one soldier dragged me and took me with him to a rice field and another soldier followed. There the two soldiers raped me again.*

Does this mean that the US authorities were utterly unaware of this crime? On the contrary, well before the end of World War II, the US armed forces became aware of the comfort women system organised by the Japanese Imperial forces.

Why was awareness of the comfort women issue as a serious war crime clearly lacking in the mind of the leaders of the Allied forces? One reason probably lies in the fact that the majority of the women victims of this enforced military prostitution were Asians and were therefore neither white women nor civilians of the Allied nations. As we have seen, the Dutch forces, who prosecuted Japanese officers for the crime of forcing Dutch girls and women into prostitution, did not even bother to investigate most cases in which Indonesian women were victimised. Some historians have pointed to the *absence of Asia* in the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.<sup>1</sup> Probably the comfort women issue was also ignored for the same reason. It took almost half a century for the enslavement of the comfort women to be considered one of the most serious and unprecedented war crimes in history.



Although military violence against women is heightened to extreme levels during war, such a firm-rooted tendency towards the sexual exploitation of women by military men is not limited to wartime. The fact that soldiers are possessed of a strong propensity to commit sexual violence even in peacetime is well supported by studies of base area prostitution, including numerous criminal cases involving soldiers. For example, it is well known that sexual violence committed by US military personnel was long endemic at its Subic Bay naval base in the Philippines, which it operated until the end of 1992. It remains a serious concern for residents living near the US military bases in Okinawa and Korea. Military violence against Okinawan women continued after the Battle of Okinawa, despite a widespread clandestine prostitution that was regulated by the US military authorities. For example, in 1955, a 6-year-old girl, Nagayama Yumiko, in Ishikawa city, was abducted, raped, and murdered by a GI stationed at Kadena Base. This is only one, if the most shocking, of numerous cases of sexual crimes committed by American soldiers in Okinawa over the past half century.<sup>2</sup> One of the most widely publicized cases was the abduction and rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan girl on her way home from shopping by three US servicemen in September 1995. The incident triggered massive demonstrations against the location of US military facilities on Okinawa.<sup>3</sup> In Korea, too, in the 20 years between 1967 and 1987, there were 72 reported cases of rape, in addition to numerous cases of physical violence against women committed by the members of the US troops stationed there. The most shocking case in Korea is probably the murder of Yun Kumi, a 26 year-old- employee at one of the US military recreation clubs. She was killed by a young US soldier in October 1992. Her dead body was covered with heavy bruises, two beer bottles and a coke bottle being inserted in her vagina.<sup>4</sup>

*After they left, I lay in the rice field alone until my father found me and took me home. The Japanese soldiers had left and taken the dead bodies of the guerrillas.*

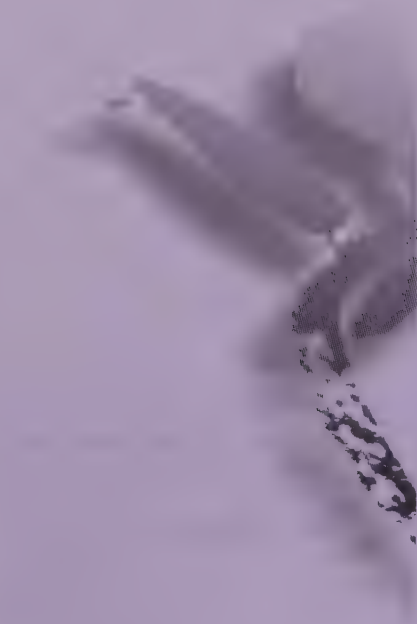
*A few days later, the Japanese soldiers again returned to our house and there they raped me again. There would usually be three to five soldiers who came to our house. This went on for about a month. They would rape me and take food from our house. My family would hide in the tunnel every time the Japanese would come and I would be left alone in the house. My father said that he believed the Japanese would not kill me and I should just accept the bitter fate that we all had to suffer. This is the kind of powerlessness and helplessness that my family had to go through. We were so afraid and so powerless that we felt there was no escape.*

*After a month, the Japanese soldiers suddenly stopped coming to our house. Perhaps they had moved to another area.*

*This is the end of my experience during the war, although I still bear the wounds and pain of it.*

*In 1952, I came to Manila, and I got married in 1954. I have eight children.*

*In December 1992 after a friend encouraged me, I decided to approach the task force of Filipino Comfort Women (later LILA PILIPINA) where I met other comfort women like me. After fifty years, it was such a relief to share with someone the painful experience that had caused me so much heartache, shame and recurring nightmares. I feel so much solidarity with Filipino Lolas and the Korean comfort women.*



However, the fact that many sex workers serving US soldiers in Okinawa, Korea, the Philippines, Japan and elsewhere are also confronting sexual violence every day receives little public attention simply because they are *prostitutes*. Yet, the sex industry around the military bases continues to function with no sign of disappearing. As Cynthia Enloe clearly demonstrated in her study of contemporary military prostitution, military organisations in general require the service provided by prostitutes in order to confirm and reconfirm a militarised masculinity.<sup>5</sup> Soldiers are expected, indeed trained, to constantly demonstrate their masculinity and dominant power over the potential enemy, even in peacetime, and the notion of masculinity naturally involves the

expectation of vigorous, even exploitative, sexual activity as a *tough guy*. Therefore, military prostitution is different from other types of commercialised sex in the sense that “there are explicit steps taken by state institutions to protect male customers without undermining their perception of themselves as sexualised men.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, military and state authorities are predisposed not only to tolerate military-controlled prostitution, but also to encourage soldiers’ macho involvement in sexual activity, in order to enhance their aggressiveness. It is not surprising, therefore, to find high levels of sexual violence committed by soldiers against women living near military bases, despite provision of military-controlled prostitution. The fundamental cause of sexual violence committed by soldiers both in war and peacetime is this military culture of sexualised masculinity, a phenomenon common to military organisations regardless of nationality.

#### Notes:

1. See, for example, Tokyo Saiban Handobukku Henshu In Kai (ed). Tokyo Saiban - Handobukku (Aoki Shoren, Tokyo, 1989) pp 167-169.
2. For details of sexual crimes committed by American soldiers in Okinawa, see, for example, Takazato Suzuyo, *Okinawa no Onna-tachi: Jyose no Jinken to Kichi, Guntai* (Akashi Shoten, Tokyo, 1996)
3. Shimabukuro Soko and Urashima Etsuko, “Kichi naki Okinawa o” in *Oruta*, No.218, January 1996, p.15.
4. Chukan Beigun Hanzai Konzetsu no tame no Undo Hombu ed., Chukan Beigun Hanzai Hakusho (Aoki Shoten, Tokyo, 1999) pp, 26-28, 123-133.
5. Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (University of California Press, Berkley, 1993), in particular Chapter 5.
6. *Ibid.*, p.145

**Source:** Extracts from *Japan's Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery and Prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation*, Yuki Tanaka.



*I am dressed in my sorrows,  
Clad in a garment of fire.  
Shall I tell you the name of my shade?*

Sara Shagufta

## We have only pride and dignity left

*Testimony to Rape as a Weapon of Ethnic Cleansing  
Presented on behalf of Nusreta Sivac, Bosnia*

*During the war in 1992, Nusreta was captured in the concentration camp of Omarska, near Prijedor. After all the suffering she had gone through, she began fighting for an end to the violence against women and for the rights of others who, like her, had been in concentration camps.*

*In 1993, before the Hague Tribunal was established, ten women from camp Omarska, members of the Biser Organisation, and the Association of Women B&H were suing Karadzic in the Federal Court of New York for war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. The trial ended that summer, and Nusreta and Jadranka Cigelj each got \$35 million. The total penalty was \$745 million.*

*Remzi Clark, Karadzic's lawyer (he was a public prosecutor in Kennedy's time and he defended Gaddafi), said that it was hard for him to listen to the witnesses, and he did not complain about the verdict. During the process, Karadzic wasn't there, so they put his poster on his chair in his place. The jury congratulated the witnesses. They said that they were shocked by their stories, and all of the judges felt the same way.*

*For Nusreta and the other witnesses, this was a moral victory that brought great satisfaction.*

*Nusreta is an active witness for the Hague Tribunal, and she has been in constant contact from the beginning. During the trial, Nusreta was a protected witness. In the town of Sanski Most (where she presently lives), she is not under witness protection. She has neither medical protection nor a psychiatrist; the general condition of her home and life is poor because our country does not protect witnesses at all.*

*During the war, Nusreta worked towards eliminating rape and violence against women through the Association of Women B&H (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in Zagreb. She is a member of Women from Omarska, and she works on identifying persons from mass graves.*

*Jadranka Cigelj and Nusreta were the main actors of a documentary movie, **Calling the Ghosts**, which won two Emmy awards in 1999. In 1996, Jadranka and Nusreta were women of the year (Miss Magazine).*

*Nusreta Sivac survived the worst kind of violence, but she goes on to speak about it and fight for the rights of other women and men. As a pre-war judge from Prijedor, Nusreta had influence on legal happenings in world courts for war crimes and showed that Bosnian women can change the ways and minds of people all over. Despite her worldwide success and meetings with important people, Nusreta doesn't see herself as exceptional from other Bosnians. But she still needs to fight for essential human rights. I have to add that in our friendship, I have found a wonderful woman and a great fighter. I hope that she will see the day when justice is delivered. After all she has suffered, I have never seen hate in her. For me, that is the greatest act of humanity.*

*The post war years have, through violence against women, left a painful and unforgettable seal on thousands of women in B&H. Many women have gone through phases of both physical and psychological violence, violence that, unfortunately, continues today in various segments of life.*

## **Resistance Towards Memorycide : Women's Voices**

*Biljana Kasic, Croatia.*

*"In the midst of everyday life, a rupture appeared. Suddenly. An old region, its people and landscape were suddenly exposed to devastation, they were precipitated through the core of writing; the abyss of death is opening... History is repeating itself, hurricane myths, centuries of dust... Biography has lost its home, its sanctuary and feelings."*

This is how Croatian writer Irena Vrkljan in her book *In Front of the Red Wall: 1991-1993* gave one of many names to the war taking place in the region of former Yugoslavia. From her autobiographical perspective, she gave it quite a simple name: *memorycide*. This is the killing off of memories of the self, killing off one's own genealogy, killing off the line of historical life.

Or as Milica B., a refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina said in 1993 during her stay in a refugee camp near Zagreb, one of her displaced sanctuaries: *We are all in fact very similar to trees which have been forcefully rooted out of their natural surroundings and planted in another country.*



Transcending a purely personal experience of the *home* into the words of *memorycide* which includes identity, landscape, history, and the sharp split of life itself are some of the transparent women's voices which are longing to be heard.

Memorycide, genocide, ethnic cleansing, *Balkan barbarism*, rape, aggression, ravages of war, flows of refugees, segregation, militarisation, neo-globalisation, nationalistic programmes of destruction, terror, unprecedented individual brutality... all these are names given to the war which took place in the region of the former Yugoslavian states between 1991 and 1999.

*War naming* is often the concern of those who have the power of naming: the lives of the people run in another direction, they become fragmented life stories or a patchwork of the silent inner selves or shadows of the selves, nothing more than pictures for the media or testimonies that do not touch public consciousness or its carriers.

*Throughout the physical violence phase, many women had to live through rape, or they were forced to watch while their daughters were raped, most often underage girls who were also raped in front of their fathers, brothers, and /or cousins.*

*Then there are many women who disappeared or were killed, while some were released dishonoured, impregnated, bearing fear, shame, pain, psychological suffering/trauma, with diminished social reputation feeling worthless, useless, aimless, destroyed. Their respect for the self has vanished, their self-esteem devoured. Many dishonoured women and girls have committed suicide, as they were ashamed of themselves.*

*Aside from the physical violence, many women survived various phases of psychological violence. They have watched the killing, slaughtering, and capturing of their children, husbands, brothers, fathers, relatives, neighbours, and friends. Children have been taken away from many mothers, never to be seen again. Thousands of women were left without their homes, backyards, villages, towns, cities, or material goods. Many women have sent their surviving children beyond the borders of B&H, in order to protect them from misery and poverty and so that they could build a better, more prosperous future.*

*Today, politically ruined, ill and unemployed, these women are left alone to care for their underage children, for whom they do not even have enough to provide the basic needs for a dignified survival. In addition to the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, these women must also ensure their children an education and protection from vices, such as alcohol, drugs and crime.*

*Many women are still searching for their disappeared family members, and many women who returned to their homes are being discriminated against. They do not have the needed facilities for living, such as water, electricity and telephones; schools are not working, there is no ambulance, unemployment is high, roads are dysfunctional, they have ownership problems, and both administrative and judiciary authorities are slow to resolve cases.*

*For the women whose human rights have been violated, many years will be needed to overcome the trauma and pain that they are unfortunately experiencing now.*

*Much has been taken from us; there is nothing left to be taken away. The only gain is one we did not wish for, Shehid family, refugeeed or exiled persons whom no one loves/likes.*

*We have only pride and dignity left.*

The pictures would be rotated within the media, in turn gaining various national frameworks - there were Croats, then Bosnians, then Serbs, then Albanians, while pictures of Roma and Jews were just interventions or mere coincidences, a certain kind of proof of the pre-existence of a multinational society or the exclusion of *Others*. Once more the public has shown how the process of selection and acculturation has been institutionalised - through the media, through ideological patterns, through memory contamination, through the process of inclusion and exclusion.

The Balkan itself was declared as a natural framework for the war/s and the process of exclusion of the *Others*. Historically, it is a place of great ambiguities, a place where different nations and different cultures have lived and intermingled with each other for ages (Greeks, Albanians, Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Turks, Jews, Bosnians, Roma, Hungarians, Romanians, Bulgarians, etc.) as well as a place of various conflicts.

Nowadays, the etymological notion of Balkan, which in Turkish has such a nice connotation meaning *a mountain wreath*, has been replaced with the negative symbolic meaning of a place whose own make-up is fleeing from itself. With all the travelling of refugees in various directions, it has become a real nomadic space.



Women's stories, dispersed and expelled, cowered amidst the futility of war at railway stations, in plastic bags, in the corners of workers' quarters turned into so-called refugee camps, in glass spectres of crumpled tram-cars packed with people, in queues fit for social welfare, suffering and waiting. Waiting for voices, for justice, for human understanding.

Time passes. Almost ten years after the beginning of the war in the Balkans, that southeast part of Europe, everything returned to its place, entering a *virtual* normality, an illusion of normality. The question of whether international justice is achievable at the surface of reality does not seem to touch their lives. People have become silent and hopeless. Some have returned to their homes, but more than tens of thousands remain displaced, thus gaining the *taste* and name of *migrants*, testifying once more to the complexity of not being heard within the dominant discourse, attesting to the truthful statements by postcolonial writers of why the subaltern (migrants, women, Others) cannot speak. Although they very often scream, or rather their pain screams for them.

*She didn't say a word but cried. They suddenly entered the camp and did it to her. Unknown men...*, as told in 1994 by R.B., a thirteen-year-old refugee from Bosnia and Herzegovina. She didn't dare to mention *rape*; she didn't dare to mention *I*. But she let her voice out.

Women activists from many countries together with local feminist groups built up support networks of immediate medical, psychological and social aid. At the same time rape became defined as a *crime against humanity* and a *crime against women* in international legal standards, thanks to feminist and women's pressure at international levels during this decade. Yet nothing is clear around the efficiency of the International Tribunal for War Crimes committed in the Region of Former Yugoslavia (The Hague), or around punishment decrees and investigation strategies.

Beyond the constraints of possible justified resolutions, beyond ethnic cleansing, which used rape as a militaristic tool and weapon for male aggressors' purposes, and beyond the disappointment towards human and ethical sets of values, stands one real need that mirrors people's desires of belonging, a need for their community. The concept of community means mapping one's own country in the sense of linking to place, landscape, one's own people, community knowledge, one's own perception of safety, a distinctive but shared lifestyle, and for most women refugees it therefore defers from the concept of nation. Rather, it is connected with the *desire of belonging* that resists the purpose of ethnic cleansing as a pattern of war division.

Crossing the boundaries, women activists have become *boundary markers* in a sense of drawing the peace, *conflict resolution* and interethnic togetherness. *When a woman who lives on the other side of the divide tells you about her life, then the facts of her life reduce your hate and ignorance - her public biography is a possibility of abolishing the national biography*, is how Lepa Mladenovic, a prominent feminist activist from Belgrade, described women's understanding in building bridges among women from across the war divide. Communication across and beyond all boundaries and lines of the divide shaped the strongest voices of the women's resistance attesting to women's disloyalty to one's own national and state authorities as well as civil disobedience, women's strength and international solidarity.

The resonance of women's messages is based on the liveliness of their own choices, the power of dignity and responsibility of globalising peace. The resistance means bringing them together, multiplying the voices of civil awareness.

**Source:** Extracts from an article contributed by the author





## Even the sun appears and disappears according to military orders



*Testimony of a Political Prisoner  
Keifah Afifi, Lebanon*

*Gentle homeland. Ruined house.  
Where jailors of hatred  
make drawings with the points  
of their silver pins.*

Manlio Argueta  
El Salvador

*I bow my head in reverence to each woman who has suffered arrest and torture and gained dignity and humanity from this experience. I bow my head to the Palestinian mothers and the mothers from the South of Lebanon who passed through the hell of torture. I thank the Court of Women for this opportunity to speak of my arrest, which represents the suffering of thousands of women with whom I identify. I'll relate my experience.*

*I was arrested by Israeli Kofrkalla in the South of Lebanon who took me, chained and blindfolded, to one of their Israeli settlements. They took me to a room full of military files, 2x2 metres. There was a table and chair where an Israeli interrogator sat. He started his inquisition. He threatened me with rape. They took me to a dark room. A huge man surprised me. He was the monster ready to jump and rape. He started to approach me and then withdrew repeatedly. He never spoke. Fifteen minutes later he said that my confessions would save me from rape. I answered, **You have raped my country and my nation.** He started to kick me and to pull my hair. They moved me to a small cell inside a truck that transfers cattle. They poured gasoline all around the cell. Suddenly I heard explosions. They said they would burn me alive to set an example for the others. I was tied to the seat of the truck. They threatened to rape and kill me. I was so young! When we reached Al-Khiyan prison, which we named the death prison, they threw me into a cell: 1 x 2 metres and very dark. It contained a thin mattress only. Every day a policewoman took me to *marjoyoun* for interrogation, which only started after blindfolding me and covering my head with a dark smelly bag. I spent every day on the floor. It was very cold. My clothes were torn. When this interrogation stage ended, the physical torture began in Al-Khiyan prison. I had to stand all night long in the prison courtyard blindfolded, with my hands and feet chained. At dawn they returned me to my cell. In the morning they made me kneel in the bathroom. They opened the water for a very long time. In this bathroom I would hear the torment of other prisoners.*

One day, on our way to a cell that housed six women, they opened the door and called me. They chained my hands and feet and put the dark bag on my head. They led me into a big bag and then threw me inside a military jeep. I was suffocated. I started moving. They opened the bag. I said, I'll suffocate and they said, we'll kill you now. I said, I'm wearing the slippers of one of my prison comrades, please return them to her. They laughed, the car moved. The next thing I knew, I was inside my cell and they were throwing water on my face because I had lost consciousness. Then many men entered. They were journalists asking me questions. But the policewoman didn't let me speak and answered all the questions untruthfully. Hours later they took me back to Al-Khiyan prison. They threw me out of the jeep like a sack of potatoes. My feet bled. Until today my feet hurt. I was taken to the interrogation room where I was whipped hard. Water was thrown on my hands, and then they were electrified. All this was repeated every day until they were tired of me. I was surprised and wondered whether the interrogation was over, then I learnt that they wanted to turn me into an agent.

In this prison, this place of torture and injustice, I did not feel exiled from family and friends. Why? The human being in Al-Khiyan prison lives without feelings or emotions. Torture is a cup from which all drink. They force us, and we are helpless. We have to submit and accept. Threats to kill and rape are our daily bread. In my permanent struggle against torture, hunger, oppression and death, I forgot that I am a human being, but I did not forget that I am a woman. They would increase their violence during my menstruation, in addition to the psychological humiliation due to lack of any hygiene. I swam in my blood. I had no sanitary napkins, except what I could slit from the thin old blanket. I shredded it into napkins. I contracted painful genital diseases. I was full of lice. Oh! If you could see the cell where I slept. It was very damp and dark. It had a very thin mattress, two thin blankets, and a small bucket to serve as a toilet. Water leaked from all the walls. Consequently my body was swollen. A wound opened in my kidney. And the cold was very harsh. When they opened my door they found me unconscious on the floor. I was transferred to hospital. They got me back the same day, without any medical help; they put me on some thin mattress with some thin cover. The interrogator came: Is the wound better? Yes, I raised my sweater and he extinguished his cigarette on my kidney. The wound is still there. How many times I had thought the end was here: I'll meet death but I could not meet death.

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and the establishment of the state of Israel were separated by about half a year (January to May 1949). Writing in 1938, Gandhi had not been sympathetic to the Jewish national home in Palestine since he thought, "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. Why should [the Jews] not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and earn their livelihood?"

He urged German Jews "to claim Germany as their home" and to follow the example of civil resistance.



## Sabra and Shatila : Testimony to Genocide

On 6 June 1982, the Israeli army invaded Lebanon, in reaction to the attempted assassination of the Israeli ambassador Argov in London on June 4. On the same day, the Israeli secret services attributed the attempted assassination to a dissident Palestinian organisation commandeered by the Iraqi government, which was then concerned with deflecting attention from its recent setback in the Iran-Iraq war. The long-prepared Israeli operation was christened Peace in the Galilee.

Initially, the Israeli government had announced its intention to penetrate 40km into Lebanese territory. The military commander, under the orders of Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, had meanwhile decided to execute a more ambitious project that Mr. Sharon had prepared several months previously. After having occupied the south of the country and destroying Palestinian and Lebanese residences there, simultaneously committing a series of violations against the civilian population, the Israeli troops penetrated as far as Beirut. By 18 June 1982 they had surrounded the Palestine Liberation Organisation's armed forces in the west side of the town.

According to Lebanese statistics, the Israeli offensive, particularly the intensive shelling against Beirut, caused 18,000 deaths and 30,000 injuries, mostly among civilians.

*Everything is prohibited in Al-Khiyan prison - talking, laughing, weeping, reading, writing, and sleeping. Even the sun appears and disappears according to their military orders.*

*I and the other prisoners turned our lives into a continuous struggle against boredom and suffering. We did not care any more of how harsh the punishment would be. We got used to it. Yet we continuously rebelled against injustice and slavery. There was an uprising in this camp against maltreatment, malnutrition and bad medication. We banged on the doors and broke the barbed wire. The prison officer entered and he kicked me all over my body and pulled my hair in front of all. He took me into another room and threw me on the lit stove. It burnt my trousers. The fire reached my legs. He asked me to stop the uprising. Our demands were better food, medical care and clothes. When we calmed down we heard the screams of our men comrades who were being tortured. Bombs were thrown into their cells. Two comrades were martyred. I will never ever forget that Christmas and New Year, which we spent in the cold of the prison courtyard: this was my fifth year in Al-Khiyan prison. But I spent seven nerve-racking years there. Any sound - the rattle of keys, a cough, footsteps - frightened us that one of us would be taken to solitary confinement and tortured.*

*I contracted skin diseases in the prison. I had no money to buy medicine, so the disease spread for a long time. We got used to disease; we resisted and tolerated. My ears ached because of the water they threw on my head. For 20 days I couldn't sleep, eat or drink. They refused me any medical help until my condition became critical. I had no contact with my family, and they had no news about me. Even the Red Cross did not visit me, and I received no clothes, no medicine, nothing. And they give us nothing. Yet we were creative in our daily life. We fought boredom. We made needles from the plastic wire they tied bread bags with. We embroidered and crocheted nature, freedom and resistance scenes. We celebrated birthdays and holy feasts. All this was prohibited, but we did it. If their search revealed any of our creative activities, then we were sent to solitary cells and tortured.*



*I left Al-Khiyan prison five years ago. But I have not forgotten. My rheumatism, kidney trouble and my slipped disc are constant reminders to me of my miseries in the prison, as accurate as a clock. How can I forget? The atrocities are indescribable. They surpass the holocaust.*

*This is Al-Khiyan prison, established by the Israeli occupation in early 1985. It stands out as an ugly landmark of the infringements against human rights and international law.*

*Who understands my grief?  
Who knows where my prison is?*

*Where is my place on this earth?  
In which grave have they buried me?*

*The police dogs are after me,  
They bite my flesh and my eyes.*

*They killed me more than once,  
By killing my rebirth.*

After two months of fighting, a ceasefire was negotiated through the intermediary of United States Envoy Philip Habib. It was agreed that the PLO would evacuate Beirut, under the supervision of a multinational force deployed in the evacuated part of the town. The Habib Accords envisaged that West Beirut would subsequently be invested by the Lebanese army, and the Palestinian leadership was given American guarantees for the security of civilians in the camps after their departure.

The evacuation of the PLO ended on 1 September 1982.

On 10 September 1982, the multinational forces left Beirut. The next day, Mr. Ariel Sharon announced that 2,000 terrorists had remained inside the Palestinian refugee camps around Beirut. On Wednesday 15 September, after the previous day's assassination of President-elect Basher Gemayel, the Israeli army occupied West Beirut, surrounding and sealing the camps of Sabra and Shatila, which were inhabited by an entirely civilian Lebanese and Palestinian population, the entirety of armed resisters (more than 14,000 people) having evacuated Beirut and its suburbs.

Historians and journalists agree that it was probably during a meeting between Ariel Sharon and Bashir Gemayel in Bikfaya on 12 September that an agreement was concluded to authorise the Lebanese forces to mop up these Palestinian camps. The intention to send the Phalangist forces into West Beirut had already been announced by Mr. Sharon on 9 July 1982, and in his biography he confirms having negotiated the operation during his meeting with Bikfaya.

From dawn on 15 September 1982, Israeli fighter-bombers were flying low over West Beirut, and Israeli troops had secured their entry. From 9 am, General Sharon was present to personally direct the Israeli penetration, installing himself in the general army area at the Kuwait embassy junction situated at the edge of Shatila. From the roof of this six-story building, it was possible to clearly observe the town and the camps of Sabra and Shatila.





*The judge was judged.  
A question was asked:  
What's the crime?  
'In death's sovereignty' the judge said  
'living is the crime.'*

*The gendarme was handcuffed.  
A question was asked:  
'What is captivity?'  
Obeying orders!*

*The jailer was locked up.  
A question was asked:  
'What is a cell?'  
Man carrying the darkness with him.*

*the sentence was given:  
the system has been arrested  
humanity has been acquitted of all crimes*


Recep Marasli  
Turkey

From midday, the camps of Sabra and Shatila - in reality a single zone of refugee camps in the south of West Beirut - were surrounded by Israeli tanks and soldiers, who had installed checkpoints all around the camps permitting the surveillance of the entrances and exits. During the late afternoon and evening, the camps were bombarded with shells.

By Thursday 16 September 1982, the Israeli army controlled West Beirut. During the morning, shells were fired down towards the camps from high locations and Israeli snipers were shooting down at people in the streets. At about midday, the Israeli military command gave the Phalangist militia the green light to enter the refugee camps. Shortly after 5 pm, a unit of approximately 150 Phalangists entered Shatila camp from the south and southwest.

For the next 40 hours inside the *surrounded and sealed* camps, the Phalangist militia raped, killed and injured a large number of unarmed civilians, mostly children, women and old people. These actions were accompanied or followed by systematic roundups, backed or reinforced by the Israeli army, resulting in dozens of disappearances.

Until the morning of Saturday 18 September 1982, the Israeli army, which knew perfectly well what was going on in the camps and whose leaders were in permanent contact with the militia leaders who perpetrated the massacre, did not intervene. Instead, they prevented civilians from escaping the camps and organised for the camps to be lit up throughout the night by flares sent into the sky from helicopters and mortars.



The count of victims varies between 700 (the official Israeli figure) and 3,500 (notably in the inquiry launched by the Israeli journalist Kapeliouk). The exact figure will never be determined because in addition to the approximately 1,000 people who were buried in communal graves by the ICRC or in the cemeteries of Beirut by members of their families, a large number of corpses were buried under bulldozed buildings by the militia themselves. Also, particularly on 17 and 18 September, hundreds of people were carried away alive in trucks towards unknown destinations, never to return.

The victims and survivors of the massacres have never received any judicial instruction, whether in Lebanon, Israel or elsewhere. After 400,000 people took to the streets in protest, the Israeli parliament (Knesset) named a commission of inquiry presided over by Mr. Yitzhak Kahan in September 1982. In spite of the limitations of the commission's mandate (it was a political and not a judicial mandate) and the total absence of the voices and demands of the victims, the Commission concluded that the Minister of Defence was personally responsible for the massacres.

Upon the insistence of the Commission and the demonstrations that followed its report, Mr. Sharon resigned from his post of Minister of Defence but remained in the government as Minister Without Portfolio. It is worth noting that, during the *Peace Now* demonstration immediately prior to Sharon's *resignation*, demonstrators were attacked with grenades, resulting in the death of a young demonstrator.

In spite of the evidence of what the UN Security Council described as a *criminal massacre*, and the sad ranking of the Sabra and Shatila massacres in humankind's collective memory as among the great crimes of the 20th Century, the man found *personally responsible*, his associates and the people who carried out the massacres have never been pursued or punished. In 1984, the Israeli journalists Schiff and Yaari concluded their chapter on the massacre with this reflection: *If there is a moral to the painful episode of Sabra and Shatila, it has yet to be acknowledged.* This reality of impunity remains true to this day.

*In early 2001, 28 Palestinian survivors of the massacre - including Ms. Srour - filed a lawsuit in a Belgian court against Mr. Sharon and other Israelis and Lebanese considered responsible for the killings. The plaintiffs took advantage of a 1993 Belgian law that gives local courts jurisdiction over violations of the Geneva war crimes convention, allowing claimants to seek cases against foreigners suspected of crimes against humanity, no matter where they occurred.*

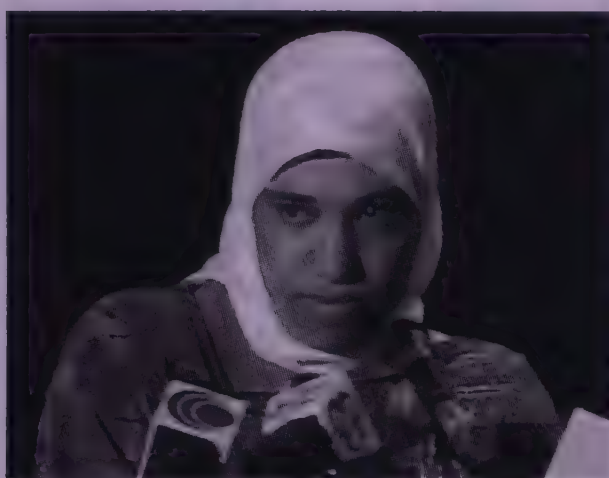


*Just when lost and shattered dreams,  
when suffering and despair  
Are uncovered and exposed*

*a new place is revealed*

*Where confidence and hope begin to grow*

*And the veil is torn*



**Souad Srour El Murai \***

*I am Souad Srour Murai a Palestinian refugee living in Lebanon.*

*I shall narrate what happened to me and to my family during the Sabra and Shatila massacres that took place during the Israeli invasion to Beirut in 1982.*

*On the 17th of September, at 5 o'clock in the evening, I went out of my house in order to go to one of the shelters where my friends were hiding from the shelling and the sniping. At the corner of my house, I was stopped by three civilian men who asked me if the place is Shatila Camp. I recognised immediately their strange accent that proved they were strangers to the place. They left after I gave them a negative answer.*

*I reached the shelter and informed my friends about what happened with me on my way. I left home and promised to come and take them back with me.*

*I reached my home, prepared the dinner for my younger sisters and brothers and then left with my younger brother Maher to that shelter. At that time, I was seventeen and my brother was twelve years old.*

Shortly before we reached the shelter we started seeing horrible scenes: bodies lying on the ground and blood flowing out of them. We heard moaning voices and people screaming out of pain. Suddenly, I was called by a voice that I recognised to be that of our neighbour Abu Rida who wanted us to help him. He told us *they slaughtered us, killed us, raped the girls and took away all the girls between 12 years and 16 years old*. Then he said, *Escape from your house, don't stay in it. They will come back and kill all the people in the camp*. I inquired about who did that but suddenly we heard a voice shouting, *You dogs are still alive? You are not dead yet?* We ran back to tell our parents of the horrible events. We informed our father about what happened and the advice of our neighbour. My father said, *Nothing will happen to us if God forbids. He created us and only He will end our lives*. We stayed in our house till the dawn of the next day, the day of Friday, 18th of September. On that night we had our neighbour with us, a pregnant woman who doesn't know anybody except us. At 4:30 early in the morning, our neighbour and my eleven-year-old brother decided to go up to the roof of the house to see what was going on in order to decide whether to stay at home or to run away. They were seen by the militiamen stationed on the hills of the stadium overlooking the camp. My brother and our neighbour were frightened and came down quickly and told us what they saw, and shortly after that we heard somebody knocking at the door. My father inquired about who was knocking at the door and he was told that they were Israelis who wanted to search the house. My father opened the door and we saw 13 armed men outside our door. Some stayed outside our door, some went to the roof and some circled around us to frighten us.

I stood up with my younger sister beside my father and the rest stood up beside my mother and our neighbour. My father welcomed them and asked them to sit down. One of the men answered that they want to take everything. I answered him back and asked him about the reason he wants to take everything after taking away the most precious thing, which is our land. I said to him, *What more do you want to take?* He answered me, *You will see what more we will take, I'll take you and your sister*. My father begged him to take everything except his children. He was hit on his face and he started bleeding. I couldn't help myself from shouting at their faces, asking them why are they hitting an old man. I was hit and pushed severely to the ground. When I felt the pain, I hit the soldier back. One of them shouted and gave an order to take us inside the room. He ordered us to stand up against the wall raising our hands above our heads. They ordered us not to look back. My sister, who was one and a half years old, raised her hands and called her mother because she was afraid. They started shooting us. My baby sister was shot in her head and her brain scattered over us. My father was shot in his heart but stayed alive. My brothers Shadi (3 years), Farid (8 years), Bassam (11 years) and my sisters Hajar (7 years) and Shadia (1 and 1/2 years) and our neighbour died right away. My brothers Maher (12 years) and Ismail (9 years) were safe because they were hiding in the bathroom. My mother and my sister Nuhad (16 years) were wounded but didn't die. As for me, I was paralyzed right away and I couldn't move. The soldiers thought that all of us were dead and left our house.



*I started screaming and asking about who was still alive. My mother, my younger sister and my two brothers from the bathroom answered. Then my father answered, but he was dangerously wounded. I asked them to escape and send somebody to rescue me and my father. So, they escaped and I was left with my wounded father surrounded by the dead members of my family. It was a horrible situation that I will never forget in my life.*

*At 10 am three militiamen came back to pick up the money they forgot, and they saw me approaching my father. They cursed me with very dirty words and told me, "See what we will do to you in front of your father." The three of them raped me one after the other in front of my father, shot me in my left hand, and went away. My father told me, "God be with you" and passed away.*

*They came back again on the same day in the evening and saw me drinking. They were furious because they found me alive. They shot me twice and hit me over my head and I fainted right away. Later during the night I woke up hearing the voices of the cats who were roaming around the dead bodies. I tried with my safe hand to cover the bodies, but I didn't succeed completely.*

*Next morning, that is, Saturday 19 September, they came back, but I pretended to be dead.*

*Sunday morning, a Lebanese soldier came to inquire about his relatives and our neighbours. I shouted for help, but I couldn't talk when I saw the soldier who took off his jacket and covered my naked body. He took me with him. On my way out of the camp I saw the slaughtered swollen bodies. I heard cries and moaning all the way. The soldier handed me to the Lebanese Red Cross, who gave artificial respiration at once. They took me to a hospital that refused to admit me because I am Palestinian; then I was taken to the American University Hospital. There were lots of reporters and journalists there, but I couldn't speak - to anyone. At that time, I lost my ability to speak.*

*I was taken to the emergency room and operated on in order to remove the bullets from my body. I started having continuous, nervous crisis and attacks whenever I remembered what happened. My right hand was safe, so I asked the doctor to bring me a paper and a pen. I wrote a sentence asking about my family. Some journalists and reporters present in the hospital promised to find my family for me. A few days later, the doctor came and told me that he had a surprise for me. It was my mother whom I didn't recognise and I was skeptical about whether she was really my mother. I couldn't talk to her, but she started reminding me of things that proved to me that she was my mother.*

*When my mother asked me about my father, whom she didn't know was dead, I started screaming and I had a nervous crisis.*

*After finishing the treatment in A.U.H., the doctor said that I should be taken abroad for treatment, but they took me to Gaza Hospital, a hospital for the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS). At the doors of the hospital I started screaming when I saw the Lebanese soldiers. I was given tranquilizers, and I woke up and found myself in bed. I couldn't bear the idea of seeing any military man or anyone, and I used to feel that everyone is coming to kill me. I continued having severe hysterical attacks.*

*The doctors told me that I'll be sent to Tripoli in the North of Lebanon and taken from there to be treated abroad. My mother prepared my things for me and I was taken by a Lebanese driver and a Lebanese bodyguard. I was lying in the back seat because I couldn't sit down. I had a urine bag, an I. V. and a respiratory apparatus.*

*We drove on the coastal road towards Tripoli. We reached the **Barbara Checkpoint** which was very famous during the Lebanese civil war. The driver asked me not to move and to pretend that I was sleeping. The militiamen on the checkpoint who belonged to the Lebanese forces ordered the driver and the bodyguard to step out of the car. They explained that I was being taken for treatment. The two militiamen at the checkpoint said, **we know the girl**, and immediately after looking at them I recognised that they were in my house during the massacres.*

*The three of us were taken away in a Jeep, on which was written, **The Lebanese Phalangists**. They told me, **now you will die**, and they ordered the bodyguard to take off his clothes and sit on a bottle. Then they hit him on the head and he died immediately in front of my eyes.*

*Then they snatched the urine bag and the IV. They took away the blankets covering me.*

*They raped me in front of the driver and put me naked at a rock on the beach in order to die: **Now she will die by herself**, they said. I stayed the whole night in that situation, and the driver was looking at me with pity. The next day the militiamen came and ordered the driver to take me back from where I came. I was taken back to the hospital in Beirut in a worse situation, unable to speak at all, refusing to see anybody and having continuous hysterical, strong, attacks.*

*For two years after that date I was unable to speak, I was on a wheelchair with all the suffering inside me, with which I continue to live.*

\* Souad Srour El Murai was a testifier at the World Court of Women on Crimes against Women, organised by the Asian Women's Human Rights Council held during the NGO forum of the Fourth World Women's Conference, in September 1995 in Beijing, China.

*سواد سُرور المرعي*



## We thought that the war was over



*Don't block my sky  
With your prayers.  
Leave me to this beam I call my land.*

*My body grows out of the grave  
To build the sky as a home  
With sun strengthened walls.*

Adonis (Ali Ahmed Sa'id)  
Syria

### *Testimony of an Agent Orange Survivor Pham Thi Xuan, Vietnam*

*During the past century, Vietnamese people have undergone numerous losses caused by the foreign invaders. The American war has left our nation with irreparable damage. A magazine of The Ministry of Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs of Vietnam in 1995 said that within eight out of ten years, 7,800,000 tonnes of bombs were dropped on Vietnam; The Washington Daily Newspaper published in April 1972 wrote: one tonne of bomb is poured down each minute. Moreover, 75 million litres of toxic chemicals, including about 45 million litres of agent orange and 338,000 tonnes of Napalm bombs, had been used against Vietnam and has left a pernicious effect on future generations.*

*According to the AP's statistics in 1975, about 4,780,897 people died in this war and 3 million were wounded. Many innocent victims have had to suffer terrible consequences of war, such as the effects of toxic chemicals. Children of toxic chemical carriers have a high rate of being deformed.*

*During the war, it was the women, the wives and the mothers who had to bear the greatest losses. They were longing desperately for their husbands and children for five, ten or even twenty years and taking care of their wounded husbands and children and relatives who returned from the warfront.*

*After the war, Vietnamese women are still suffering the consequences. Many men died while fighting, and their wives became widows. Others returned with diseases and delayed effects such as malaria, mental derangement, deafness, blindness, etc. The wives had to care for them for 10 years, 20 years or even the rest of their lives, but in vain.*

*The most painful physical effect is hereditary disease handed down from generation to generation. At present, there are thousands of children born with defects as their parents had lived and worked in the areas contaminated with toxic chemicals. This is the pain in the hearts of the Vietnamese people and the Vietnamese women in particular, including me: Pham Thi Xuan, one of the victims of the war.*

*Today, on behalf of the families of all war victims in general and of Vietnamese women in particular, I attend this forum to share the sorrow that we have suffered for the last 30 years after the war.*

*Eleven years ago, my husband joined the battle in South Vietnam, and after the liberation of the South in 1975, he returned and we got married. In 1980, my first child was born and his name is Do Xuan Chung. We thought that the war was over and happiness had come back to us, especially since my parents-in-law expected our son to relieve them of the loss of their eldest son in the 1968 battle. The happiness of receiving our first child was put out soon when he got brain and epileptic disease with many epileptic fits. Every time he got an epileptic fit, his body became stiff and got many dark purple marks. Each of these epileptic fits would often last about five to ten minutes, and this happened five to seven times per day.*

*Every day I had to work to have my son treated with acupuncture and physiotherapy. I did anything suggested by anyone to cure his disease. I even caught a house lizard for him to swallow, as it is said that it would help. He was too small to swallow it, so I chewed it for him.*

## **Agent Orange: The Forgotten War Crime**

*In a suburb of Hanoi, Nguyen Quang Que, 52, sits quietly with his family in a tiny home. Outside, ducks and water buffalo roam free. On a small bamboo cot in the middle of the family's living quarters, Que's daughter, 20, a victim of cerebral palsy, writhes painfully, uttering incoherent cries, her limbs and fingers bent and tangled at odd angles, unable to perform even the most basic bodily functions on her own. Que, a nine-year veteran of the war, was repeatedly exposed to Agent Orange while passing through heavily sprayed zones during the fighting. Afterward, beginning in 1974, three of Que's children died at birth, and the fourth developed her catastrophic disabilities.*

*She now has a vegetative life, says Dai. When I ask whether Que and his wife, Thien, have ever been tested for dioxin residues, Dai gazes softly at me for a moment. To test this family would cost \$1,000 each, he says quietly. If we had that money, wouldn't it be better to give it to the family?*

Concern about the environmental impact of warfare began in earnest with *Operation Ranch Hand*, the U.S. campaign to defoliate Vietnam's jungles and flush out guerrillas during the late 1960s. American military aircraft sprayed some 70 million litres of extra-strong herbicides, mostly a formulation known as *Agent Orange*, over the country between 1962 and 1971, dousing 1.7 million hectares, often several times over. By the end of the war, a fifth of South Vietnam's forests had been chemically annihilated, and more than a third of its mangrove forests were dead. Some forests have since recovered, but much of the land has turned, apparently permanently, to scrubby grassland.



## An unwarranted experiment in chemical warfare

From the start there was concern that Agent Orange was toxic to humans as well as trees. In 1964, the Federation of American Scientists condemned *Operation Ranch Hand* as an unwarranted experiment in chemical warfare. But the operation continued until a spate of reports in 1970 and 1971 revealed that Agent Orange was causing birth defects. Soon research showed that 2,4,5-T, one of its two main constituents, caused malformations and stillbirths in mice and contained dioxin, a by-product that turned out to be one of the most poisonous substances known to science. It disrupts the body's hormonal, immune and reproductive systems, and causes fathers to produce damaged sperm.

Nature has cleansed Vietnamese soils and vegetation of most of the dioxin, but the chemical has lingered on in human blood, fat and breast milk. According to Le Cao Dai, director of the Agent Orange Victim Fund set up by the Viet Nam Red Cross, the breast milk of women in former South Vietnam who were exposed to Agent Orange in childhood contains about ten times more dioxin than that of women in former North Vietnam or industrialised nations such as the U.S.

*I have been looking after him for the last 21 years. Now he can walk but is still suffering from epilepsy with uncontrolled screaming and laughing, smashing his head against the wall, tearing clothes, blankets... and he cannot talk. His epileptic fit is still severe. He sometimes smashes his head against the furniture, which makes his face bleed and bruise. He needs support in all daily activities, even eating and drinking.*

*In 1985, I gave birth to a daughter named Do Thi Chinh. She was dynamic and healthy. She could feed and dress her brother at the age of 5. She studied well and created good poems. She was a source of inspiration for us. Unfortunately, bad luck again attacked my family; her eyes grew dim in 1994 when she was 9 years old and in 4th grade. She told me, Mum, I have headache and my eyes grow dim. I thought I had that because I was hungry, now I'm full but it is still there. Please take me for check-up. I was panicky and brought her for check-up. Her eyesight was 9/10 at that time. After 3 months she got another check-up, the eyesight was 7/10, and down to 5/10 after that. Currently the eyesight is 3/10 and there is the risk of getting worse.*

*I feel extremely painful with tears in my eyes whenever I witness my husband, son and daughter convulsed and exhausted with pain from the wounds, malaria, nightmare, epilepsy and the worsening condition of the eyes.*

*At night, I cannot sleep thinking of our old age. Who will take care of us when we get old? If I was asked what is my dream, I would wish my husband and my children are healthy and there will be no one suffering like my children. I have devoted most of my energy, sentiments and time to my son. For the last 21 years, I've never had a good sleep or a good meal.*



*My family's is not the only case of suffering from such a plight. Many other families share the same situation with us. I would like to give the example of Mr. Nguyen Thanh Toan and Mrs. Nguyen Thi Mui's family in Dong Chau village, Ky Son commune, Ky Anh district, Ha Tinh province. Mr. Toan joined the army in 1966. After his demobilisation, they gave birth to four children: Nguyen Thanh Huong was born in 1971, and during his early age he developed normally. When he was 8 years old he had myasthenia and died in 1992. When they were seven or eight, the other three children- Nguyen Thanh Quan born in 1974, Nguyen Thanh Hong born in 1975 and Nguyen Thanh Hai born in 1979 - had myasthenia symptoms like their elder brother. Their health was getting poorer and poorer. They could not move and serve for themselves, even simple actions such as feeding themselves. They need the care of others. At present, doctors and family members cannot save them from this horrible disease. Their parents are facing difficulty and can hardly afford to feed and care for them.*

*Another sad case is that of Mr. Nguyen Anh Hoan and Mrs. Thanh Quang's family in Thai Binh. They have seven children. Six of them were deformed and died at a very young age. Another case is Mrs. Loan's family living in Van Quang commune, Thien Yen district, Thanh Hoa province. They had two children named Xoan and Dao. These children could neither walk nor speak.*

*All examples mentioned are poor victims living in silent sorrow. They are just among millions of war victims in Vietnam.*

*With this meeting, I would like to share with you the pain and hardships that women like me have to suffer due to unjust war.*

Appalling birth defects among the children of veterans exposed to Agent Orange and other pesticides during the war are well documented. According to Professor Hoang Dinh Cau, the chairman of Vietnam's 10-80 Committee, which investigates the consequences of the use of chemicals during the war, tens of thousands of children are affected. Common symptoms are limbs twisted in a characteristic way or missing altogether, and eyes without pupils. And now there is growing concern that a third generation of children may be affected.

For the state department, the question of how to respond to Vietnam's concerns over Agent Orange is an explosive one - especially for the U.S. embassy in Hanoi, which handles Agent Orange inquiries as if they were poison.

Chuck Searcy, who represents the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF) in Hanoi, has followed the Agent Orange controversy for years. *I am absolutely convinced that the United States will hunker down for a hundred years before they admit any guilt or liability over Agent Orange*, he says. Searcy has also heard reports of spills of Agent Orange at former U.S. bases where as many as 7,500 gallons simply disappeared into the ground.

Outside Hanoi, at the Vietnam Veterans Association Friendship Village, one of approximately a dozen facilities the country has set up to care for veterans and children injured by Agent Orange, aid workers have no doubts about America's responsibility. *We've gotten suggestions that maybe we should file a lawsuit about Agent Orange, but our perception is different*, says Nguyen Khai Hung, director of the village. *We do not blame the companies, because they produced Agent Orange under the orders of the U.S. government. It was the government that gave the order to spray the chemical, and it is the government that has to be responsible.*

If there is any silver lining to the Agent Orange disaster, it starts with the clouds that bring monsoon rains to Vietnam.



Water, in Vietnam, is everywhere. Viewed from the air over Hue, the former imperial capital that is now in ruins, thousands of bomb craters filled with water dot the beaches and tidal flats along the coast, appearing like countless, perfectly circular mirrors reflecting Vietnam's violent past. Two thousand Vietnamese rivers carry nearly a trillion cubic metres of water to the sea every year, fed by rains that in some parts of the country total an astonishing 10 feet a year. For 30 seasons, great cleansing rainfalls have deluged Vietnam's green-lit, inland mountains and coastal plains, washing more and more of the war's poisons from the scarred battlefields of Khe Sanh and Pleiku and flushing them into the vast South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean beyond.

*The tides in Vietnam are very powerful, says Dai of the Red Cross, sometimes filling rivers up to 40 to 60 kilometers inland and then pulling waste matter out to sea. All of this, over time, has helped the country purge itself of Agent Orange dioxin.*

Yet all the water in the world can't cleanse the bodies of Vietnamese already sickened by the toxin. For them, Vietnam's burden begins with medical care and rehabilitation. Next comes educating people in dioxin-contaminated areas about steps they can take to protect themselves. In some areas, that means fencing off hot spots or cleaning them up. Cleanup, however, may be next to impossible if it is found that large areas of southern Vietnam are still dangerous to humans. *You can't dig up and steam clean a hundred billion tonnes of dirt, says Searcy of the VVAF.*

*The United States must help, insists Dai, The children being born now with birth defects did not fight the United States. But they are suffering.*

Source: The Web



*Why do these children and their families have to suffer injustice? What is the future of these children and their families? I do believe that at this meeting, the participants will formulate a detailed plan of action to include women's voice for a peaceful and developed world in which all people enjoy freedom and equality. In order to do that, we urge:*

- \* To build up a culture of peace and humanism so that our next generations will not have to suffer war but can enjoy peace and development.*
- \* To launch practical activities to prevent the risks of war, to combat against the massive killings, and to preserve peace.*
- \* To solve problems of the maimed, invalids, their handicapped children and their families who fell in difficult situation, to make satisfactory compensation to ease their sorrow and the disadvantages that they have to suffer.*

*May this conference map out a practical plan of action that contributes to preserving peace on earth and providing support to the victims of war.*

It is a world that is  
closing its ears

*You may write me down in history  
With your bitter twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like the dust I will rise.*

Kishwar Naheed

*Testimony on Sanctions as a Weapon of Mass Destruction  
and the use of Depleted Uranium in Iraq  
Samira Bayatti, Iraq*

*I would like to apologise for having chosen to start differently. Before coming to the Court I was reviewing my testimony, which I have the honour to bring to you. I received a call from a friend who informed me of a terrifying tragedy that happened to an Iraqi woman. One tragedy added to a million ones imposed on us while we are still waiting for the world's consciousness to awaken.*

*Hyatt was an Iraqi university professor living in Baghdad, where she taught comparative literature for 20 years. She died recently after committing suicide with one of her daughters. Her other daughter was taken to hospital while she was on the verge of death. In brief, Dr. Hyatt could not bear poverty, oppression and especially the unclear future for her and her daughters.*

*After a long period of suffering, she started to sell the house furniture, only after selling all her books, which she considered her real wealth. She had to sell her belongings in order to buy what little food she could. After a long discussion with her two student daughters, the three of them decided to commit suicide with cooking gas, as life had become meaningless. They closed the kitchen windows, locked the door and opened the nozzle of the gas cylinder.*

*Dr. Hyatt choked and died as did the eldest daughter. In the last minute, the little daughter started to scream with all her strength. The neighbours heard the screaming and broke into the house, by breaking the door. They were the first to witness the tragedy. A mother and her daughter had just passed away. A daughter on the verge of death was saved at the last minute but would spend the rest of her life suffering.*



## Depleted Uranium: The Hidden War Crime

Six-month-old Yacoub Yusif, with his small hand twisted at a right angle, with no thumb on his small foreshortened right arm, was comparatively lucky. Six-year-old Mustafa Ahmed with his bright, intelligent face and great dark eyes had gross deformities of all his stick-like limbs, of his facial bones, his hands pathetically turned. Sitting on the examination table like a frail broken doll he said: *I can write*. Hunched over a minute square of paper (paper is vetoed by the Sanctions Committee) and clutching a pencil stub between his knuckles (pencils are also vetoed, since they contain graphite), he wrote in beautiful Arabic, laughing triumphantly at his achievement.

*Each minute in Iraq, 12 children die because of the embargo. Nine thousand children die every month. One hundred thousand of our children during the last 10 years have passed away. More than a million and a half Iraqi children tragically died during the years of the embargo, not to mention what happened to the other groups, especially the elderly women of the society. It is a catastrophe being lived by all Iraqi people. The tears of a father and those of the mother are the signs of an everyday mourning to the whole world, signs that hunger is killing our children. It is killing my mother, my brother, my father, my neighbour, my sister, and my friend. It is a world that is closing its ears so that it doesn't have to listen. It is closing its eyes so that it won't see the crime done in the name of international law, the crime of what the inhumane embargo is doing to my country and to my people! But hope should not die. I wish you to be a part of the hope. I fully understand that law is my profession and that I have to present a study. But here I am bringing a testimony. I am an Iraqi woman who feels that part of her body is being buried everyday, every hour and every second. The rest of me is torn by other parts of the world. It is, in fact, bleeding on the remains of the living corpses in the embargoed Iraq. Iraq, in which hope, dreams, happiness and futures have been destroyed. Who could believe that in a country like Iraq people die from hunger? And a land in which flows a fertile river that once attracted the attention of millions of people throughout history with its richness and variety of sources, today has no food, no medicines, no medical care, and its schools are being blocked. And all this when we know that Iraq is the origin of all knowledge and science. How can the world sleep with a clear conscience when Iraq is living a catastrophe, a situation in which even those children who can actually survive are suffering disability due to lack of food and medicines. According to international aid agencies, about 10 million Iraqis under the age of 16 are threatened by disability that is affecting the growth of their bodies and their brain. Which future, if at all Iraq would have, could be made by the physically and mentally handicapped youth?*



*The embargo imposed is ten years old – this is a long time to understand the truths and objectives of the embargo, to understand its effects and its results. It made the Iraqi issue a terrifying tragedy at its human level. It is a massive crime – it is the most massive crime that has ever been described at the political level. It unveils the evil intention to fragment and decompose the Iraqi nation as an independent country. It is an organised form of mass destruction of a people and civilisation that has been built up throughout thousands of years. It affected all means of life – economical, social and cultural. It is a cause of many pains and sufferings of the Iraqi person, be it a child, a woman, a man, a youth or the elderly, which is a very good illustration of the ruthlessness of the new world order and globalisation that has sprung from it. Its basic tenets are the violation of human rights and the wishes and hopes of the people of the different cultures. I am not exaggerating when I say that the legal basis for the embargo in accordance with the international principles and the provisions of international law confirm that the embargo is a crime against humanity and a form of terrorism that the superpower is exercising against a whole nation.*

*The sanctions imposed on Iraq have diverted from their original purpose. It lost its legitimacy, its legal basis – the moral standard has disintegrated. During the past 11 years, the sanctions as well as the constant attacks on Iraq have become permanent extreme violations of the international legal practices. The sanctions violate the sovereignty of Iraq and the unity of its people, exploiting Iraq's inability to defend itself.*

*Although the Charter of the United Nations and the Security Council includes provisions that legitimise the use of economic sanctions, the legitimacy of the UN is drawn from its principle goals that are international peace, security and economic growth. This means, in my own understanding as an expert in international law, that the sanctions cannot continue through all this time with this unjustified severity putting Iraq back hundreds of years in addition to the destruction of any prospects for development.*

Ali Samir, seven, shuffled in like a tiny, bird-like old man; the expression in his eyes was of one who has seen all the trials of the world. He was covered from head to toe with ulcerations, which tightened and ruptured his skin as they healed. His fingers were turned inwards and seared into his palms; he had no toes. When his gay *Route 97* top was lifted up, the terrible, searing ulcerations on his back brought tears to the eyes. *Surgery is counterproductive, since he won't heal - this is a genetic malformation caused by environmental changes in pregnancy*, said Consultant, Dr. Harith. The Zafaranya district of Baghdad where he lives was bombed relentlessly in the Gulf War and a nuclear reactor reportedly hit. It was bombed again in 1993 and Ali was still recovering from this terror in the December bombings when the district was hit again. He too could write and did so with pride. But he was unable to tell us - he had no tongue.

In the southern, beautiful, relentlessly bombarded city of Basrah where the biblical Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet the Shat Al Arab, the state of health takes another dimension again. One doctor has completed a thesis comparing the congenital abnormalities, cancers and malignancies since the Gulf War with Hiroshima. Dr. Jenan Ali has been keeping a record of *mysterious* congenital anomalies. Her photographs of 1998 were chilling. Full-term babies undeveloped, the so-called *bunch of grapes* babies reminiscent of the nuclear testing areas of the South Pacific. A baby with no face, another with no eyes, twisted limbs, or no limbs. A tiny mite with a huge head - and no brain. Page after page of tragedy. *All young parents, with no history of abnormalities in the family as far as we can tell - since we have few laboratory facilities now. Further, she felt that many were not recorded in the textbooks - but we cannot be sure since we have had no textbooks since 1990.* (Many textbooks and medical journals are banned by the UN Sanctions Committee or have been severely delayed in their delivery to Iraq.)



At the Saddam Pediatric Hospital, Sahara, aged 3, was dying. She had acute myeloid leukemia and was bleeding internally from the nose and gums. She needed 10-15 units of platelets a day – the doctors could obtain just one. *In the UK and US leukemia is a treatable disease, yet due to a lack of chemotherapy we have not achieved one cure - only some remissions - in the last eight years*, said Dr. Rad Aljanabi, Chief Resident. *In '94, '95 and '96, we had no treatment at all, so every single patient died.* Iraq's cancer, leukemia and malignancy rate has risen sevenfold since the Gulf War, a rise associated with the depleted uranium weapons used primarily by the US and UK, which left a residue of radioactive dust throughout the country, and which according to studies, including those by John Hopkins University in the US, has entered the food chain via the water table and soil.

A nurse brought in a small bundle wrapped in cloth - simple, sterile wrappings since baby clothing is just a memory in another formerly internationally renowned hospital. Unwrapped, the tiny being, making little bleating noises, had no eyes, no nose, a sweet little mouth but no tongue or esophagus, no hands or genitalia. Hopelessly twisted small legs were joined together from the knees upwards by a thick web of flesh. *We see many similar*, commented Dr. Janeen.

*The previous Secretary-General of the UN, Mr. Boutros-Ghali has noted this discrepancy and has submitted many reports to the Security Council to bring attention to the discrepancies between the goals of the UN and the effects of the embargo on Iraq. All these facts make the embargo an imposition on the Security Council and the United Nations because of the control of superpowers such as the United States, which use the United Nations to further their own interests and which also make sanctions a tool for the oppression of a whole people by taking away their basic rights, the most obvious being the right to life.*

*The justification of the United States for the embargo contains a lot of misleading statements and misconceptions; it is illogical and contains very little truth. Lifting of the embargo is the real gateway to change in Iraq; a change that Iraqis will make and accept. The slogan of change through embargo is just as hypocritical as the slogan of preserving the security in the Gulf through the embargo. Is the security of the Gulf area endangered by the Iraqi people leading normal lives, getting onto planes, treating their sick, providing the necessities to their dependents, supplying medical supplies in their hospitals, sending their children to schools and universities, providing clean clothes and nice toys? It is dishonest of those who claim to support peace and security in the Gulf while the Iraqis are starving. No doubt that people of the Gulf realise this fallacy and also know how dangerous it is to neighbour a country with the chaos and destruction of infrastructure that is a result of the embargo on Iraq.*

*It is also a fallacy to prevent Iraq from building up its arms supply even while the neighbouring countries are engaged in strengthening their defence systems. Israel is a prominent example of this. This matter can be resolved through tools that are more efficient and less harmful to the Iraqi people. This was the intention of the International Observers, which China, Russia and France have continued to advocate, and is enough to guarantee that Iraq does not own weapons of mass destruction. The other route is that embargo should be aimed at the manufacturers of weapons and the dealers, who in essence are the ones violating the embargo, instead of punishing an innocent population and destroying a country through policies that they have not been party to.*

*In my experience of the Iraqi situation for the last 11 years, the United States of America and all other parties involved in this issue with the exception of the Iraqi people, have an interest in keeping the situation as it is. Washington seeks to continue the embargo and to keep the Iraqi system in the box as it serves its own interests.*

*The embargo on Iraq is of high interest to the United States. This is based upon internal reasons within the US, such as the competition between the Democrat and Republican parties as well as the American public policy that constantly needs an external enemy to guarantee its internal cohesion. And at the international front, the US continues to uphold the presence of this enemy, i.e. Iraq, and the fear of its presence in order to legitimise its military presence in the Gulf and the control of resources such as oil, as well as utilise the proceeds in return for the increase in its armament.*

*In the maternity unit, midwife Bushra Nasser said: My colleague delivered the baby you saw. I am frightened of what I might deliver. With no ultrasound or scanning facilities (vetoed) there is no knowledge until birth. Sometimes the mothers attack us in their agony. In this event, the baby we watched being born was a healthy eight pounds - but the conditions were so unsanitary, without hot water, with cockroaches crawling over the metal of the delivery bed - disinfectant is vetoed, electricity off eighteen hours a day - odds were stacked against him from the moment of birth.*

*When mothers ask: Is it all right? there is terror in the question. Some soil samples in areas of Basrah show 84 times (sic) background radiation from uranium elements.*

*A 23-day-old baby died two minutes before we reached the ward. His mother had run, inconsolable, screaming, from the hospital. The grandmother, upright, proud Shia, in her black abaya, tears streaming down her face, stood by his cot as I vainly stroked his small, perfect head and face, so warm, feeling somehow he could be brought back. All he had needed was oxygen. There was none.*



The two doctors and the soldier screamed at us as we left, *you want a story, you want pictures: there is a two-year-old baby dead on the sixth floor - the doctors did everything they could, all he needed was oxygen - two years old. What more do you want of us?*

As we left, Dr. Ali - Glasgow trained, world-renowned surgeon said, *you have seen the state of our hospitals, what will we do if they are bombed again?* The hospital, founded by British General Maude, had been hit in the Iran/Iraq War and two doctors killed. In the Gulf War, it was pounded so relentlessly that people often were unable to collect the dead, said Dr. Ali: *Dogs were eating bodies in the street.* I said it was impossible to believe it could happen again. For what? We left Basra and returned to Baghdad. The following morning Basra was bombed.

There is a monument in Basra to Iraqi Airways. It reads: *Iraqi Airways, 1947 - 1990.* It could be a metaphor for Iraq.

**Source:** The Health of the Iraqi People  
Felicity Arbuthnot

*It is estimated that the value of weapons sold in the Gulf region since the end of the second Gulf war in 1991 is approximately 170 million US dollars. And all this to exclude Iraq from the Arab-Israeli conflict even while we witness the violations that are taking place within the frame of the balance of power of Israeli interest. Worst of all, the US and Britain have turned Iraq into a field of arms testing that is threatening man and nature by using internationally forbidden arms that contain Uranium. The United States forces have thrown on the country of Iraq and its villages more than 300 tonnes of Depleted Uranium that contain radioactive substances.*

*The radioactivity of these bombs has increased the rate of cancer and other deadly diseases. The rate of cancer among the Iraq people went up from 4,340 cases in 1990 to 12,000 in the year 2000. It is three times the number. Cases of child deformation, sterility amongst men and women, kidney malfunctioning, blindness, etc have happened. Experts declare that the spread of Uranium in the air could lead to a complete change of the Iraqi human beings in the coming 25 years, adding to that, total destruction of its water and soil, which is highly concentrated with Uranium atoms. So I invite you all to think of this horrifying experience.*

*I am here and wonder how we could explain the savageness of the American administration, be it Democrats or Republicans, and its position vis-à-vis the economic sanctions, even at the price of a human catastrophe, i.e. the extermination of a whole nation.*



## Arguments Against the Bombing

*Consider the infinite fragility of an infant's skull  
how the bones lie soft and open  
only time knitting them shut*

*consider a delicate porcelain bowl  
how it crushes under a single blow  
— in one moment whole years disappear*

*consider that beneath the din of explosions  
no song can be heard  
no cry*

*consider your own sky on fire  
your name erased  
your children's lives "a price worth paying"*

*consider the faces you do not see  
the eyes you refuse to meet  
"collateral damage"*

*how in these words  
the world cracks open*

- Lisa Suhair Majaj



## An open letter sent to the United Nations Security Council

January 5, 1999

Dear Ambassador,

You and your government take seats on the Security Council at a critical time. The next two years will determine whether tens of thousands of people in Iraq live, or die, and millions sustain painful, crippling permanent injuries from further malnutrition and sickness which could have been avoided altogether, or quickly cured if medicines and clean water had not been denied by Security Council sanctions. The independence and sovereignty of every nation and the integrity and viability of the United Nations depends on Security Council action now to end these sanctions, acknowledge their harm and prohibit future imposition of sanctions designed to kill, injure and degrade an entire population. Your action in this moment of moral crisis will be judged in history.

These facts are undeniable:

1. Since August 6, 1990, the forty-fifth anniversary of the incineration of Hiroshima by an atomic blast, Security Council sanctions have killed more than a million and a half people in Iraq, mostly infants, children, elderly and chronically ill and left millions more stunted, with crippled bodies, shortened lives, and minds scarred by the realization that rich nations forced this devastating impoverishment and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment on their entire people.
2. The Security Council sanctions against Iraq are a genocidal act. The sanctions were imposed with the *intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such*. They have caused *serious bodily and mental harm* and inflicted *conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction* of the people of Iraq. (Article II, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 78 U.N.T.S. 277).

3. No fear or hatred of Saddam Hussein, and no threat to peace or life that the present government of Iraq might pose can justify the imposition or continuation of these sanctions. No failure to comply with a Security Council resolution can justify the imposition of genocidal sanctions against the people within a nation or criminal military assaults against a defenseless population. The Security Council must find morally acceptable means for the prevention of war and international violence. It must meet the highest standards for international conduct, not the most deadly and violent. Other nations have defied Security Council resolutions for decades, developing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction including nuclear bombs all the while, without any Security Council penalty.
4. The Security Council has been coerced, deceived, misled and manipulated for eight years by the United States to cause it to maintain economic sanctions against Iraq as a justification for the United States military domination in the region through the presence of the largest naval armada since World War II in order to control the natural resources located there and the economies of the nations worldwide who are dependent on them.

The poor and powerless of the world and the future viability of the United Nations depend on you to act now to end the sanctions against Iraq. Dante found the hottest places in the Inferno were reserved for those who in time of moral crisis did nothing. History will long celebrate courageous action by you to end these sanctions in this moment of maximum peril.

With deep love for your people, hope for their government and a passionate desire to see the United Nations fulfill its mandate, end the scourge of war, prohibit economic sanctions which impoverish a people and establish peace for all.

Sincerely,

Ramsey Clark

**Source:** International Action Centre.



## Americans don't like flowers



*Don't talk to me about human rights. Nasra al-Sa'adoun's voice is firm. Your analysis is too simplistic. You see the West as good and Iraq as bad. You think you have the right to interfere in our affairs because you have always done so.*

Nasra is a neat, grey-haired woman with a degree from the Sorbonne in Paris and a knowledge of British history which far exceeds my own. She can quote chapter and verse of the deals, the betrayals; the whole complex web of Anglo-Iraqi relationships so redolent of colonial and neo-colonial relationships around the world. In a word, she blames the British. It is hardly surprising. Her grandfather, who was Iraq's Prime Minister, committed suicide rather than surrender to the British. His statue now stands in one of Baghdad's main streets, which is named after him, a small, Gandhi-like figure in bronze. He was 40 years old.

On 17 January this year, the ninth anniversary of the Gulf War, Mustapha, Nasra's husband, friend and partner died suddenly at the age of 52. A heart attack, they said.

No-one knows why fit and healthy people like Mustapha just collapse, leaving their families deep in grief. Iraq is festooned with the black banners that announce a new death. Perhaps you can die of a broken heart after all.

Nasra feels that she is facing yet another bereavement; the death of her country: *Where are our human rights here in Iraq? We have no electricity, no clean water, no trains, no safe cars, an environment which is being destroyed, and you are bombing us every day. I tell you, we would rather have a real war than this slow death. This is genocide.*

The sanctions are the most draconian ever imposed by the United Nations. The UN is caught in the ambiguous position as both the cause of suffering and the body responsible for alleviating it. These are the only sanctions this century imposed as a complete embargo on all trade (with a few exceptions) rather than just an embargo on particular goods or areas. In this sense, says Sabah Al-Mukhtar, an Iraqi living in London who is President of the League of Arab Lawyers, *the whole country is being kept prisoner and denied the basic requirements for survival*. Denis Halliday, who resigned from his post as Humanitarian Co-ordinator in Iraq rather than administer the sanctions regime, puts it even more strongly: *We are in the process of destroying an entire nation. It is as simple and as terrifying as that. It is illegal and immoral.*



The figures speak for themselves. UNICEF believes that between 5,000 and 6,000 children die each month as a direct result of sanctions. The mortality rate for children under five has risen from 48 per 1,000 in 1990 to 122 per 1,000 in 1997. One in four children is malnourished; a rise of 73 per cent since 1991.

And yet the country is sitting on probably the second-largest oil reserves in the world. In May 1996 Iraq was allowed to sell a limited amount of oil in return for food, but this improved the situation only marginally. The infrastructure does not exist to pump the allocated oil, and oil prices in any case remain very low. With a large amount siphoned off for other purposes Iraq ultimately gets around \$1.5 billion over a six-month period worth of humanitarian goods. It costs \$600 million to give each person one kilo of sugar over the same period.

But deprivation is not only physical, but emotional as well. Many parents of the young people growing up today were well-educated, well-fed and well-travelled, but the new generation is angry, hungry and isolated from the world. New young cadres in the ruling Ba'ath party believe that President Saddam Hussein and the current Government have compromised too much with the West, and take a much harder line. Other children simply see the US as the enemy. This was encapsulated for me when I met Dina, aged 7, whose mother and father are both civil engineers. Dina is keen to show me her drawings, which are detailed and imaginative. Many are the princesses and mermaids, mummies, daddies and school friends that you would expect from someone her age.

But then I come across one of a soldier. He is standing on the right of the page and seemed to be shooting something on the left. *What is this?* I ask her. She whispered something shyly. Her parents are clearly embarrassed. *She says this is an American soldier and he is shooting the flowers.*

*But why?*

*She says Americans don't like flowers.*

It is not surprising. Dina, like all children in Iraq, has known only an aggressive, punitive West. The flowers in her family's garden bloom, but up to half the palm trees – in a country which exported 80 per cent of the world's dates – have died. This is due to not only a lack of agriculture equipment and chemicals but also the fallout from the Gulf War, which has so polluted Iraq's environment. Radioactivity from depleted uranium (from Western bombs and shells) leaves a terrible mark on the faces of those Iraqi children who suffer from cancers and leukemia.





In addition, in the north and south, people face almost-daily bombings, which began when the US and the UK launched Operation Desert Fox in December last year. The death toll then was over 10,000. And the bombing has never stopped.

We ourselves witnessed the aftermath of just one of these everyday tragedies. A family of six shepherds (the youngest six years old), their herd of 100 sheep and their sheep dog have been wiped out. The animals are still there: their stench fills the air. You can see a ripped tire, a blasted shoe, and fragments of metal, testaments to more unnecessary deaths. The local cemetery holds only two graves; there were simply not enough pieces left to bury.

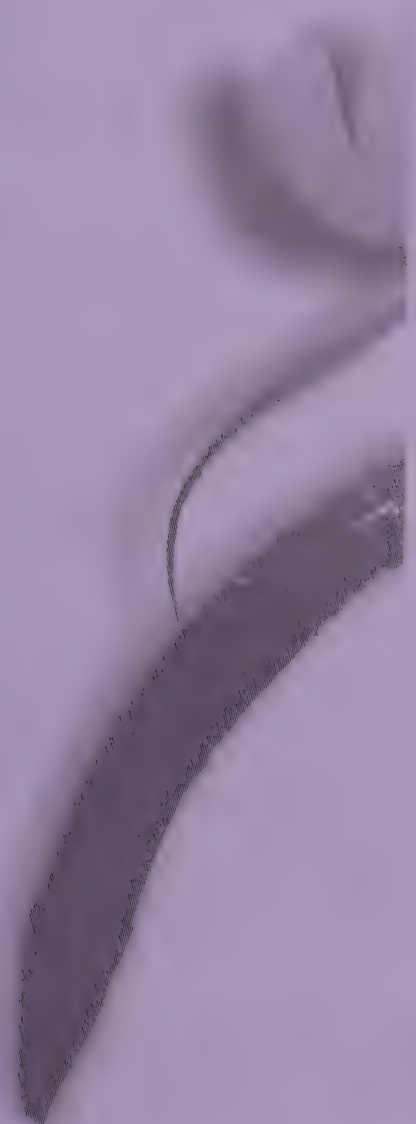
The US and Britain justify the bombing of the *no-fly zones* (which they unilaterally imposed) with the claim that they are protecting the citizens by bombing the military. Yet in the place where the shepherds died there were no camps or soldiers to be seen, just the village of Basheka, known for its vineyards, some three kilometres distance. Otherwise it was just bare earth with mountains in the distance. But somehow a military directive calls this a *target-rich zone*. It was Gandhi who pointed out, *what does it matter to the widows, the orphans, the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought in the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty and democracy?*

Jawdat al Kazzi is a priest from southern Lebanon who has lived in northern Iraq for 13 years. He is a grey-haired with a quiet manner, which somehow makes his fury palpable: *If Clinton and Blair were really Christians they wouldn't do this to us.* His voice is clear, determined.

*But then, you see, a capitalist society cannot be truly Christian because it puts money before everything else. Dollars before people. Here in Iraq, we have no money any more. Iraqis have lost everything. But they still have their morality; they are a very moral people.*

We sit in the flickering light of an oil lamp in a Dominican church, whose French connections go back to the wife of Napoleon III who donated the church bell. The priest points out the inconsistency of the American stand: *There is one rule for Iraq, another for America's friends, like Israel. America allows Israel to break all the rules, to ignore 37 UN resolutions, to invade and occupy Palestine, Lebanon and Syria; to have a nuclear bomb and chemical weapons... and what happens? Nothing. Yet Iraq has nearly honoured all the Security Council resolutions but the US will not permit the lifting of the embargo. This is hypocrisy of the highest order.*

*Sanctions* said US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, *are the most powerful weapons in our armory.*



Yet the other irony in all this is that the sanctions and bombing regime has achieved the opposite of what was intended. It has consolidated rather than weakened the Government's power; Saddam Hussein has become for many in Iraq – and indeed in the Middle East – a symbol of Iraqi resistance and determination never to bow to Western pressure. Opposition within the country is simply not tolerated, and the Iraqi opposition in exile that has been rendered ineffective by the multiplicity of parties (at least 85 according to a US State Department list). Acrimonious exchanges between the various groups suggest they hate each other almost as much as they hate the regime.

In the West, the public are led to believe that everything that is happening – or at least everything that is allowed to reach their ears – is the fault of the Iraqi regime; or more specifically, of President Saddam Hussein, who since the Gulf War has become the man the world most loves to hate. He is portrayed as a ruthless monster, a dictator who murders his own people by the thousands, and stockpiles food and medicines rather than feed his starving people. There seems little truth in the latter allegation but it is clear that the regime – and it is the regime, not just the President – brooks no dissent and punishes those who speak out with imprisonment or execution. This has been presented as a targeting of minorities. It is not. The Government in general allows its minorities – including the Kurds – more freedom to practice their religion and culture than any other Middle Eastern government, so long as they are not seen as a threat because of their national aspirations. Those who are seen as a threat are simply not tolerated. Amnesty International in its 1999 Annual Report finds the regime guilty of *torture and ill-treatment of prisoners and detainees; hundreds of executions and thousands disappeared*; a record that echoes that of many other dictatorial governments in other parts of the world.

And yet prior to the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein was seen as a good guy, armed and supported by the West in the Iran-Iraq war. Even after the chemical bombardment of the Kurds in the town of Halabja in 1988, the US Commerce Department continued to export military equipment to Iraq – including chemicals necessary for the manufacture of nerve gas. Military regimes such as Iraq's are in many ways a product of the West, born of the Cold War when proxy battles were fought throughout the Majority World and dictators spawned with the firepower to keep a tight and often repressive hold on their own people and to freely implement their masters' desires. The West also fears Islam. After the Iranian Revolution, it supported Iraq as one way of keeping the Shi'a regime there in check.

But Western alliances have a habit of changing when it suits other strategic objectives, as Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, points out: *You know, 12 years ago, when I was received in Washington at the White House, Yasser Arafat was a terrorist. Former terrorists in Northern Ireland are now received in Washington and London. But now our specification as an ally has changed, and Iraq is the monster, the terrorist.*



Inside the country many people point to the undoubted development that took place under Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1980s when Iraq was a prosperous country despite the crippling Iran-Iraq war.

Between 1984 and 1989 Iraqis were on an average eating about 3,372 calories a day (minimum requirement 2,100). Adult literacy had risen to 95 per cent (Iraq won the UNESCO prize for literacy three years in a row); 92 per cent of the population had access to safe water and 93 per cent access to a clinic or hospital. Both education and health were free and Iraq's welfare system was *one of the most comprehensive and generous in the Arab world*.

So was its aid programme. Iraq prided itself on the support it gave to countries in need and the important role it played in the power balance of the Middle East. Economic rights were a priority, civil liberties were not. Now the Iraqi people have neither.

Sanctions were originally imposed by the UN in on August 6th 1990 – before the Gulf War and the anniversary of Hiroshima day – to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait. So why weren't they lifted after this was achieved militarily?

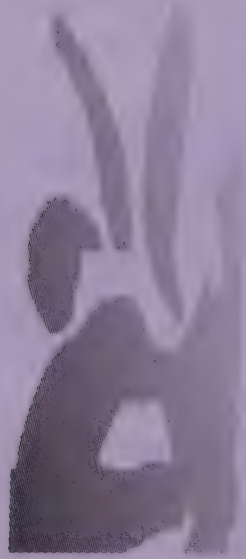
The regime refuses to comply with UN resolutions, says the West. But the US has at various points tied the sanctions to the continued rule of Saddam Hussein – not the UN-endorsed disarmament requirements. It seems that they are simply making conditions so difficult to comply with that sanctions will remain indefinitely. Not surprisingly people in Iraq are pessimistic, and see US motives as having more to do with tying Iraq's hands as a political force in the region and keeping its oil – it has the second-largest reserves of oil in the world – off a volatile market.

In 1996 American journalist Lesley Stahl pointed out to Madeleine Albright, then US Ambassador to the UN and now US Secretary of State, that half a million children were reputed to have died: *that's more children than died in Hiroshima. Is the price worth it? Albright did not question the figures but replied, I think this is a very hard choice, but the price – we think the price is worth it.*

When I thank Nasra before leaving, she replies bluntly; *I don't talk to you for your sake, but for the sake of my country*. Her grandfather's pride and passion for Iraq is never far beneath the surface. *You know*, she smiles quietly to herself, *I was asked the other day by another foreigner: What should I tell people when they ask me: Why haven't the Iraqi people risen up against Saddam Hussein? I told him to tell them that the Iraqi people are perfectly capable of sorting out our own affairs. Tell them*, I said. *Tell them to mind their own business. Lift sanctions and let us rebuild our country.*

**Source:** Nikki van der Gaag, New Internationalist, September 1999





*Corpses have grown  
And covered the land  
Ancestral spirits driven from home  
Walked tearful abroad  
The orphaned land weeps.*

*We have squatted before the shrines  
Have bled our knees in pain*

*Earth echoes with alien sounds  
Stuttering rifles, weird moans -  
And the harsh face of war  
fills the land with abomination.*

Ken Saro - Wiwa  
Nigeria

## The legacy of war

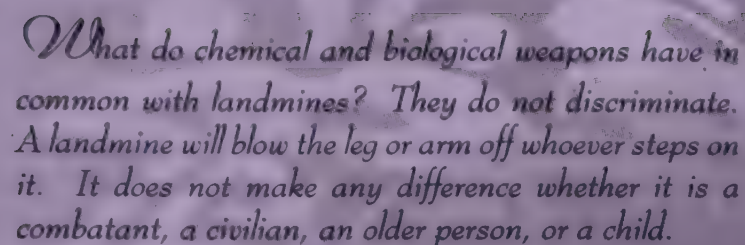
*Testimony of a Landmines Victim  
Pun Srey Leak, Cambodia*

*My name is Pun Srey Leak, and I was born on 5 March 1979 in Komnop Village, Slokrom Commune, Banteay Meanchey Province, which is a province on the Cambodia-Thailand border. During the war, this region was a crucial battlefield and was full of minefields.*

*I am the daughter of a schoolteacher who lived in a remote border region. Mine was a large family with lots of children, and the burden of housework fell on me from an early age. That's why I didn't have time for schoolwork and sometimes got to school late. Because I was the eldest daughter, I had to take care of my siblings as well as the house.*

*One day, when I was 13 years old, I went to the cow pasture with two friends and a cousin. We were following the cows when suddenly I stood on a mine – a drum mine. I screamed with the pain. My left leg was blown off below the knee, and my right foot was severely injured. A moment later, a man came and helped me. He tore up his scarf and tied it as a tourniquet around my thigh. Then he took me to the village. On the way, he met other villagers who had heard the blast, and they all tried to help me.*





*What do chemical and biological weapons have in common with landmines? They do not discriminate. A landmine will blow the leg or arm off whoever steps on it. It does not make any difference whether it is a combatant, a civilian, an older person, or a child.*

Senator Patrick Leahy  
Landmines Moratorium Act  
US Congress 1992

*I was sent to the hospital at Mongkol Borei by remork, a motorbike with a long tray attached to the back. It was a journey of 24 kilometers. At the hospital, I saw a lot of patients who had been injured by mines, most of them elderly males. Some of them were injured worse than me because both their legs had been amputated, or because the mines had blinded them. This is*

*the legacy of war, the legacy of the powerful, but the suffering is borne by the little people, the gentle people.*

*I stayed in the hospital for a month. My mother and father took care of me. My leg was amputated. I felt this was an injustice.*

*The treatment was free, but the health system lacked medicine so my parents had to find a way to pay for the extra medicine I needed. When I left the hospital two months later, I was granted permission by the Red Cross hospital to get prosthesis. I spent fifteen days learning how to walk with my new leg. When I could walk, I went back to school and finished Grade Four. I continued studying Grade Five for six months before I stopped altogether because my grandfather was seriously ill and I had to go and take care of him. Anyway, at school, former friends laughed at me because I was pica, handicapped.*

*Truly, my parents loved and always supported me, but some of the villagers and friends discriminated against me and despised me because I am disabled. They think that even if I studied to a high level, I wouldn't be able to get a job. These attitudes depress me and I want to go far away from them. But is it my fault that I am disabled? Am I not a human being too? Why do they discriminate against me? Luckily, an organisation called Jesuit Service Cambodia gave me a scholarship to study embroidery. This is one way I can sustain my life.*

*Through this forum, I would call on the whole world to stop the manufacture of weapons of war and landmines in particular. I take this opportunity to call on the leaders of the world to stop war and give Cambodia back its peace.*



## Landmines in Cambodia

Cambodia has a landmine-amputee population of 35,000. One in 236 Cambodians has been injured this way. These statistics make Cambodia the highest physically disabled population in the world.

Landmines have been called *the perfect soldier* - they never sleep and they never miss.

Nobody knows this reality better than the 26,000 people a year who become new landmine victims - that's around 500 a week, or 71 people per day. There are already more than 250,000 severely landmine-disabled people around the world, and with more than 100 million landmines in 64 countries, that figure will keep rising.

Used as a military weapon, it is ironic that most victims are civilians in peacetime, often many years or decades after the conflict has ended. Those most at risk are inevitably the poorest and most vulnerable - nomads, subsistence farmers, herders and fleeing or returning refugees - and the most dependent on physical fitness for work.

Landmines destroy the fabric of rural communities, which depend on land for agriculture, grazing, and trading. In Cambodia, 35 per cent more land could be cultivated if it were not for the threat of mines. Those who die after stepping on a mine leave behind dependants. Those who survive are disabled, with all the difficulties of making a living and supporting themselves and their families, which entails placing a heavy burden on already impoverished communities.

Cambodia is hardly alone in its struggles, either; Afghanistan, Angola, Iraq and Laos are also heavily plagued with landmines and their ensuing destruction.

During the US forces' nine-year bombing campaign of Laos, thousands of mines were dropped by plane in a vain attempt to close the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It has been estimated that more than two million dollars worth of bombs were dropped each day. But Cambodia suffered still more, with mines deployed even more extensively - and this time at random - by opposing factions in the civil war.

Today there are an estimated 110 million anti-personnel mines in the ground round the world and another 100 million in stockpiles. Between 5 and 10 million more mines are produced each year, benefiting the producers to the tune of £30 to £120 million annually.

The United States is against the banning of landmines. President Clinton, in 1994, was the first leader to call for an international ban on anti-personnel landmines. Yet in 1997 when they all met in Ottawa, Canada, to sign a treaty to ban the use, the US wasn't there. And as the treaty became binding international law on March 1 1999, the United States has once again come under scrutiny as they look to actually increase spending on a new mine system. Other nations such as Russia, China, Cuba, Turkey, North and South Korea, India and Pakistan have also refused to sign the treaty, but the US is the most influential and therefore their lack of co-operation and leadership is an even more serious blow for such a treaty. As a result, there has been a lot of sustained pressure to urge the US to sign the agreement. But, the US is spending a lot of money in various efforts to de-mine areas. While many feel that this is good, some have pointed out that this is not enough and that a full ban with a reduction or elimination of the production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines is needed. As the introduction to a landmine documentary says, *Paradoxically, the U.S. reserves the right to lay mines anywhere, even as it supports mine removal and humanitarian relief for the victims of mine warfare.* In fact, Human Rights Watch reports that the US is to begin tests on a *victim-activated* landmine. While the US has said that they will join the treaty in 2006, this current endeavor is anything but heading towards a reduction, which the US was once one of the most vocal on.

In an additional report, Human Rights Watch continues to criticise the United States, and says it also bears responsibility for the landmine crisis. They also point out that the United States is one of the largest producers, exporters and stockpilers of landmines.

**Source:** Anup Shah, India.



## Cambodia: An Everyday War

*We* all know the stories and the images. But most of us will never be able to grasp the extent of the sheer horror that Cambodia has gone through. Over one million people died from torture, hunger and exhaustion or by execution. Cambodia is a free country but in the minds of many people the war is still raging on, every day.

Before 1970, the country had been ruled rather stably by Prince Norodom Sihanouk even after the war had broken out in the neighbouring country, Vietnam. However in 1970, pro-American General Lon Nol carried out a coup and deposed Sihanouk. Sihanouk remained popular in the public mind despite being out of power, and he continued to dominate the political scene in Cambodia. On his appeals from China to the Cambodian people, the peasants in Cambodia rose in massive protests against the government. The Cambodian Government in power retaliated by abolishing monarchy and declaring Cambodia as Khmer Republic.

In Beijing, the deposed Sihanouk forged alliance with the Kampuchea Communist Party (KCP), an alliance that was brokered by China. The alliance, National United Front of Kampuchea (FUNK) announced the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (GRUNK) in May 1970 with Sihanouk as head of State, a ministry of loyal subjects of Sihanouk while the KCP commanded the army and the insurgency within Cambodia. Pol Pot directed the military operations of the army.

The civilian strife in Cambodia eventually dragged the country into the vortex of a wider war. Where the ill-equipped and ill-trained Cambodian Government troops, Khmer National Armed Forces (FANK), were pitted against the army of the Coalition GRUNK, named as Cambodian Peoples' National Liberation Forces (CPNLAF) and the highly organised and well-trained forces of North Vietnam and the Viet Cong of neighbouring Vietnam, who feared the growing western influence and the American military presence in Cambodia. The North Vietnam and Viet Cong, who were in a struggle against American troops in the South, shifted their military bases and installations further into Cambodia.

### *A leaf blowing in the wind*

*They say this is the border. But this isn't the end. Soldiers on the other side waiting to shoot you. We meet a trader. He tells us we have to walk along the border to find a camp, maybe another week. We have to pass OChrau, which used to be a big trading place, and find the bridge into Thailand.*

*What's that? I ask the woman I go with. It's a bamboo stuck in the ground with a leaf on top of it.*

*She says it's good luck. But it smells bad here, a funny, greasy, burning smell. Then I see it. The leg. Just a leg, lying there, black from sun, no person to go with it. Oh, no! Over there is a man without the leg.*

### *Mines.*

*The lady says it's a dangerous place. People who go through here before us, they leave two or three bamboo sticks as a mark. This is a trail of the dead. See another body. Another, another. Their own bodies leave marks, so we know when the mines are there. Sometimes we don't know if the body is dead or they fall asleep or they are still alive. Just keep running.*

*Mine blows up in front of us - phhsssh-swok!*

*See a hand floating out of the air, it looks so natural, then a finger floats by.*



*Natural as a leaf blowing in the wind.*

*Always scared now, all the time. My hands shake every minute. Big gun noise overhead - blam! blam! blam! - hear fighting all the time. Even when I sleep, I dream it's still happening. Imagine myself walking around a mine, imagine myself dropping down fast because a bomb just exploded. It's in your mind all the time. If I don't have all those things to think about, I don't know if I can go on.*

*You become accustomed to it. You even see people killed in front of your face, shot by the big gun or blown up; you see it all the time. Your eyes see, but your mind, it's not a human mind anymore, it doesn't care what it sees.*

*I even see a head come off a body.*

*They tell us to run on top of the bodies. You can't step on a mine if you walk on the bodies that have already fallen. Can I do it? I just want to get over.*

*It's funny. Doesn't bother me that much.*

*Pass O Chrau. See the river! Across the river, little Thailand houses. Bridge is destroyed by the time we get there. Just put some tree across ... have to go ... keep going ...*

**Source:** Forced Out

Phat Mohym, ten-year-old girl, Cambodia

Extracts from the article The Agony of the Refugee in Our Time by Carole Kismaric

Within the GRUNK Coalition, tensions built up amongst the partners, and within the year, Sihanouk was reduced to a passive figurehead while KCP continued its fierce civil strife and insurgency within Cambodia. By June 1970, CPNLF with its core Khmer Rouge leadership, along with North Vietnam and the Viet Cong forces, had pushed the republican army (FANK) from out of the Northeastern Cambodia and gradually proceeded with *liberating* areas from Government control. This advance of Khmer Rouge resulted in a strong and brutal retaliation by American and South Vietnam armies, which started extensive aerial bombing of Cambodia, allegedly to stem the advancing Khmer Rouge forces and to destroy North Vietnam the Viet Cong installations in Cambodia.

The indiscriminate scale of bombardments by America and South Vietnam resulted in widespread and extensive civilian casualties. While no definite estimate of the deaths is available, the number is estimated as anywhere between 30,000 to 500,000. According to US official documents, in the summer of 1973, 79,959 sorties were made over Cambodia during which 539,129 tonnes of ordnance were dropped (about 350% of the tonnage dropped over Japan during the World War II). *Arclight Sorties*, as the bombing missions were named in the USA, severely crippled normal life in Cambodia and dealt shattering blows to the structure of life in many villages in the country, driving the people of Cambodia into the arms of Khmer Rouge. Even today, the country is struggling to recover from the economic, life and development losses of the US and South Vietnamese Attacks.

The Cambodian Communists had refused to take part in the Paris peace talks. When North Vietnam and the United States signed the Paris Peace Accords on January 27, 1973, bombing missions over Vietnam and Laos were terminated. The fighter bombers and other aircraft thus released were diverted to strike Khmer Rouge positions in Cambodia.



In 1976, the Republic of Democratic Kampuchea was proclaimed, and the Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot—supported by the People's Republic of China—became its premier. The next year the Kampuchea Communist Party was officially recognised as the country's governing body. Led by the notorious Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge killed more than one million Cambodians through forced labour and starvation before being driven from power in 1979 by its former Vietnamese allies.

Miserable living and working conditions throughout the country bred starvation and disease, and these factors, along with the Khmer Rouge's systematic extermination of the educated and middle classes and any other perceived enemies of the regime, has resulted in the death of as many as 2,000,000 Cambodians by 1979. The Khmer Rouge's combative stance toward their powerful neighbour, Vietnam, prompted the latter to launch a military invasion of Cambodia in 1979. The Vietnamese drove the Khmer Rouge into the western hinterlands and established a client Cambodian government composed largely of defectors from the Khmer Rouge. This socialist government was relatively benign compared to the preceding regime, but the reconstruction efforts that it undertook were severely hampered by meager foreign aid and the death of skilled Cambodian technicians and professionals. Meanwhile, fighting continued between Khmer Rouge guerrillas and Cambodia's Vietnam-backed government.

A 19-nation conference held in Paris in October 1991, under the auspices of the United Nations, evolved a peace accord among the several Cambodian factions. The accord set up an interim government composed of three units. The first unit was the Vietnamese-backed government (headed by Hun Sen), which continued to administer the nation, but under the UN supervision to ensure that it would not interfere with the electoral processes and the rights of all parties. The second unit was a UN body, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), composed of about 2,400 civilian officials, 3,600 police, and 3,600 soldiers. Its role was to repatriate the thousands of refugees, to disarm and demobilise thousands of soldiers and rebels, and to organise elections in 1993. The third governmental unit was the Supreme National Council (SNC), headed by Prince Sihanouk and composed of representatives of the Vietnamese-backed government, the Khmer Rouge, Sihanouk's followers, and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (an anticommunist group).

The war story did not end here. It left its violent aftermath. There are more than eight million mines left in the field of Cambodia. The number is beyond the Cambodian population. And what is worse, laying mines is still going on after the peace accord. It is said that the damage by those mines would not disappear at least in this century.

Shakun Mohini, Vimochana, Bangalore, India



We witnessed and  
survived the unthinkable



*Testimony on Genocide in Rwanda*  
*Odette Mukansore, Rwanda*

*The memory that I guard in my mind is immeasurable, and I share it with a million other victims of genocide.*

*Our country, Rwanda, has become unfortunately famous these past ten years for its armed conflicts, in particular the genocide of April 1994. We witnessed and survived the horrible and the unthinkable; we endured and crossed the impossible.*

*The victims of the genocide and massacres were the unarmed and blameless Tutsi. We heard all those around us talking of some ethnic group or of some political party suddenly becoming enemies, assassins, and mass murderers; the intolerance was always seen in their eyes, but we didn't understand it.*

*During the genocide, women became scapegoats, lacking the dignity and respect that all humans deserve. Violence against women became a weapon of war. Thus, the Rwandese woman, who marries without any ethnic discrimination, found herself forced into one camp or another. No Rwandese family can say that they haven't been affected by the genocide.*



*No man was hacked in the city;  
those were only names  
that were murdered,*

*Nobody beheaded anyone;  
only the severed hats  
had heads in them.*

*And the blood  
You see on the streets  
belongs to the butchered voices.*

Gulzar - India



## *Ethnic discrimination as a weapon of the Rwanda genocide: My story*

*On the April 10, 1994, a group of people [some men and one woman] asked me to undress so that they could identify my ethnic group. How great was my surprise and frustration when I heard this! I asked myself if my sexual organs determined the ethnic group. Good God! Thankfully, I didn't have to undress myself because my husband, who had been inside, immediately intervened. My husband and the people started discussing the price we would pay in order to stop them from seeing me naked.*

*You give us the television set, they told my husband, and he let them take it. Satisfied, the head of the group offered to drive me to a parish and give me shelter. However, his real intention was to kill all the refugees in the parish. It started to rain incessantly. The group of people turned back to go. I left for the journey thinking I would be killed. I wanted to follow them and then retrace my steps home. The rain didn't let up. I was hungry, scared and drenched to the bone.*

*Frightened, I tried to return home, but the gate was closed. I wanted to knock on the door. I hesitated for a long time because I was afraid of being caught by the neighbours, who wanted to pounce on me. I stayed a while between the sides of my neighbours' houses. I spent one night there, standing! That night, all those who had taken refuge at the church of Gikondo were burnt. The next day I called my son, and he asked me to come out. Finally, I could be home. I opened the door and the neighbours heard. The group that was stationed at the neighbour's place pounced on us. Unharmed, I ran in haste to another neighbour's place. I stayed the night. There was a lot of firing, and many people evacuated the area.*

### *Where is the path to exile? What do we pass through?*

*I didn't know where my path of exile would lead me. I started walking, and about 5 kilometers into my escape from my home some people stopped me, rummaged through my things, and took whatever they wanted. I continued on the path for about 3 kilometers until I met a barricade. A little scamp stopped me and asked me to show him my identity card. He wanted to verify my ethnic group, which is registered on these cards, and he threatened to kill me. He took a few things from my bags and allowed me to continue on my journey. Further away, there was another barricade, with many people around it. A youth approached me, grabbed my shoulder and said: you come and sit with your brother. I was sitting next to my brother who was waiting for nothing else but to be killed; we were waiting because we were too many to be killed quickly! When our number eight, came, we decided to run as a group. They were going to kill us anyway, so we had nothing to lose. They fired at us, but some of us survived. We kept running.*



*In the valley of Nyabugogo, there was another barricade. One woman, who was in front of the wardens of the barricade, threatened my youngest sister and questioned her ethnic group. Alice told them the whole truth, adding that she was a student. When I saw her, I pretended to ignore her. Having recognised me, she called me by my name. I continued to ignore her, and she screamed in a loud voice, you also have abandoned me? The lady who was questioning was disinterested with Alice and eventually made her way towards me. She started to torture me; she stamped me, made me undress and took my loincloth away.*

*Meanwhile, the children had continued on the journey. Undressed, with only my under garments, I left after some time. I felt tired. I was starving and so I sat under a tree. All of a sudden I noticed a minibus filled with corpses that were going to be thrown into the river. The driver, a colleague from work, roared like a lion: Eh! Odette you lied that you are Hutu! (The ethnic group that committed the genocide on the entire Tutsi group.) He invited me to enter his vehicle. I refused because I wasn't sure of the destination. He said, you are refusing to come with me because you are a Tutsi. You are going to meet another barricade on the river, and quite close to that at Nyabarongo, you will be killed. By chance, I found the children near where I was, and we spent the night there. We started to beg for food, clothes, etc.*

*The next day we continued our journey for about 15 kilometers and we saw many dead bodies. We met another barricade where they again checked our things, took what they wanted, and finally let us go. We covered approximately 40 kilometres until we arrived at the home of the Burgomaster of our district, about 50 kilometres from Kigali. His wife told us that she didn't want us in their house without her husband present. Meanwhile, my husband arrived. We decided to go to my parents' home, which was already destroyed. When we reached Kabgayi, it was deserted. We searched for shelter, but we were shunned everywhere. I then remembered my aunt who lived nearby, about 2 kilometres away. My husband decided to go back to Kigali; after searching for the contacts of his Belgian friends, we began preparing for our evacuation. People said that we were Tutsis and that we must leave our native country, Ethiopia. While I was preparing to leave, a neighbour from Kigali told me my husband had died.*

## **The Sexual Politics of Survival in Rwanda**

*From the fourteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, Rwanda was a centralised kingdom. Europeans arrived only in the 1890s, when Germany conquered Rwanda and Burundi and they ruled them as part of German East Africa until the end of the First World War. After the German defeat, the League of Nations mandated the two landlocked central African nations to Belgium, which had already colonised neighbouring Congo. Although a social revolution had been in progress since 1959, Rwanda regained its independence in 1962 before its problems were resolved. Today Rwanda is a poor, densely populated, fertile but mountainous country, smaller than the state of Massachusetts. Illiteracy still handicaps half of the women and one-third of the men. All Rwandans, without exception, suffered and are still suffering from the atrocities of the civil war that started in October 1990 when the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded from Uganda. Hundreds of thousands of people were killed, and continue to be killed today, all of them Banyarwanda killed by other Banyarwanda. Half of the country's eight million people were uprooted: two million were displaced within the country and another two million fled to neighbouring, not always friendly, nations. A group of extremists in the country turned the power struggle between the government, its opposition and the RPF into a vicious and bloody ethnic war, which was on the verge of resolution following the signing of the Arusha Accords in August 1993.*



On 6 April 1994, all on board died when the plane returning President Juvenal Habyarimana from negotiations in Tanzania was shot down in Kigali, the capital. Seemingly on cue, the RPF, extremist militias, the Presidential Guard and the national army, implementing a plan apparently developed long before this event, began to eliminate their enemies and systematically exterminate moderates who favoured reconciliation. *Hutu-dominated ultra-nationalist groups used the ethnic card to inflame animosities entrenched by Belgian colonists in classic divide-and-rule ploys that pitted the majority Hutu against the minority Tutsi.* In 1994, the military, militias and civilians murdered between 500,000 and one million people. While both groups killed people of the opposite group as well as members of their own group, ethnic Tutsi sustained the largest numbers of deaths - 600,000, representing 70 per cent of all Tutsi in the country. The intensity and ferocity of the slaughter stunned the international community as well as Rwandans themselves.

*I sent my oldest son Yves to warn my brothers who were caught in another place. Yves told me about the death of my brother Charles. He was killed the day before with hundreds of others.*

*It was a difficult period of confrontations and clashes. The military murderers were destroying the wells of water, and people began to die of dehydration. Our children refused to die of thirst, so they took their jerry cans and went to the nearby valley in search of water. It was there that the murderers found them; they surrounded and brutally killed them. I helplessly witnessed my own sons die.*

*I watched as innocent people were beaten with clubs and sticks all night long. In the morning, a group of people drove me to the cemetery to kill me, but someone interrupted them with news of another Tutsi in hiding. They left me alone, sitting on the edge of the coffin of my choice, which would receive my dead body. Two other people were there also. I didn't know them, but they reassured me, telling me that they came to set me free and not to kill me. On the road to refuge, we passed a group of dead children, which included my son.*

*I had just a few minutes to glance at him, cover him with a small piece of my loincloth, and leave him in that place.*

*The rehabilitation and the reparation of the social fabric - is it possible? And the cohabitation with the people who committed the genocide - is it realistic?*

*The aftermath is always difficult. The widowed, the orphans dependant on me, the poverty, the neighbourhood to support, the memories of family members who have disappeared - all this was very heavy, very painful for me. Yet, it enabled me to live among others with different stories. That is how the survivors, the members of an association of women, have existed since 1986 as a network of women working for rural development, under the vision of its national coordinator, Nzambazamariya Veneranda, who died on 30/01/2000. She was at the Court of Nairobi, and she came to look for me, to pull me out of this sinister situation of insulation and desperation.*



*I started to rehabilitate myself, to get back the flavour of life, to relive what I knew of these unspeakable pains. It was Christmas day 1996, the day of a family festival, the day of joy! It was the period of the massive return of the Rwandese refugees from Zaire. I was seated quietly at my home, which was left for me by my late husband in the company of my brother, at that time a serviceman. We chatted happily with the children, Rene, Yvette and Remy. The atmosphere was mainly happy, until a man, whom people said had murdered my husband, stood by the entrance with a Bible in his hand. My brother grabbed his gun. He was ready to kill the man. The man was extremely relaxed though, like he was free from fear, like he accepted all when he arrived. He said quietly and calmly, truly, you can kill me without problems; it was I who killed Christopher. The only burden on my heart was this. Now that I have told you this, I can die. I am repenting for my sins. I would like to hand over his watch that I have kept safely all this while; the slippers and the chains I sold while on the path of exile, in order to support my family.*

*This man, the assassin who made me a widow, who made my children orphans - doesn't he deserve to die?*

*But by some grace of God, I realised that even with his death, I will never stop being a widow and my children will always be without their father. I called the gendarmerie, and the man was thus put to humane justice, waiting to present himself before that which is divine.*

Both national and international factors are involved in the Rwandan civil war. The international community failed in many ways in regard to this conflict. At a time of acute political and social crisis, the World Bank applied austerity measures, which, combined with the impact of the currency devaluations imposed by the IMF, contributed to the impoverishment of the Rwandan people and the destabilisation of the society. The international community not only failed to stop the war and the genocide in 1994 but also withdrew the United Nations forces stationed inside the country on 22 April 1994. Then it failed to separate the people responsible for the genocide from the mass of refugees. Finally, the international community encouraged host countries to force refugees to return to Rwanda and pressured the RPF government to accept them, even though it was clear that no preparations had been made for their return and that many of them might be jailed arbitrarily or assassinated. As one commentator noted in April 1996, *The two million Rwandans cramped in camps in Zaire and Tanzania have nothing to return to, nothing to look forward to: agricultural markets have been destroyed, local level food production and the coffee economy have been shattered, urban employment and social programmes have been erased.*

Rwandan men and women have been implicated in the killings, but investigations show that women bore the brunt of the civil war. It is estimated that 20 per cent of the male population died, leaving 60 per cent of women widowed; 70 per cent of Rwanda's population is now female. In the chaos of the crisis in the spring of 1994, sexual violence occurred on a massive scale; reportedly more than 250,000 women were raped. It is clear that violence against women is still continuing in overt, brutal, subtle and ambiguous ways.

**Source:** What Women Do in Wartime: Gender Conflict in Africa Edited by: Meredith Turshen, Clotilda Twagiramariya



## *Conclusion: towards a better future in solidarity.*

*The women of Rwanda, Africa and the entire world, all heads of families with imprisoned husbands and deceased loved ones, have the same responsibilities as head of the home. They are at the mercy of all sorts of violence, poverty, contempt and non-assistance; they are deprived of love and affection, living with the pain and suffering. Thus, the importance and the necessity of this Court in Cape Town is to help us change the world:*

- \* for the widows and the orphans bearing the pain caused by the genocide in Rwanda.*
- \* that never again will such vile actions be taken against people.*
- \* that our children and their children will live in a world without discrimination.*
- \* that women can change the world and make it non-racist and war-free.*
- \* to make peace and security reign, that everyone in the world merits the "World Peace Prize" like Veneranda Nzambazamariya, who received the Millennium Peace Prize for Women by the UNIFEM and International Alert.*

*After thinking a lot about this, I search and call the entire world, especially the women, to have confidence in this Court that we can directly influence the future of our respective countries, to struggle and fight for peace in the Great Lakes, in Africa and the entire world, and to prepare the future for our children who need a society that cares about them.*

*I recommend, and it is also the request of my compatriots, that the Court should be held in Rwanda because the process will render moral justice to the millions of children and women who were violated, the widows and the orphans in distress, in addition to the efforts of rehabilitation and reparation in those places. Once again, believe in God.*

## **Consenting Victims, Eventual Executioners**

*Decades before the 1994 Rwandan genocide, an anti-Tutsi apartheid created a mindset in school children that Tutsis were a sub-human class, a middle-aged Tutsi woman in tears told a jury in an historic trial here this week. The system created both *consenting victims and potential executioners*, the woman, who escaped the massacres, said as testimonies got underway. Four Rwandans, including two Roman Catholic nuns, are on trial for war crimes committed during the massacre of an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in the central African state of Rwanda.*

*Please forgive me if I cry. I will try to put the truth before the eyes of humanity, said Yolande Mukagasana, 47, who lost her husband and three children in the 1994 bloodbath by Hutu militias and extremists.*

*Discrimination against the Tutsis began in grade school, she said, when they were humiliated before their classmates by teachers explaining how to tell them apart from Rwandans.*

*In class, Odette [a Tutsi classmate] was very tall, very thin. I was very small, she told the jury. We were put in front of the class to show that while the Tutsis were tall, there were exceptions and mistakes could be made.*

*Their teacher explained to the class there were other ways to distinguish Tutsis from Rwandans, the texture of their hair, for example. Mukagasana, the teacher showed the class, did not have the frizzy hair characteristic of Hutu Rwandans.*

*The children gathered around us, ran their fingers through our hair. During recreation period, they made circles around us and hooted at us.*

*We were made to think of ourselves as worthless, that the others were more intelligent. And it worked. We grew up, some of us consenting victims, others eventual executioners.*

Yolande Mukagasana painted a chilling portrait of carefully constructed institutionalised hatred of the Tutsis, the principal victims of the genocide. Vincent Ntezimana, 39, Alphonse Higaniro, 51, and Roman Catholic nuns Consolata Mukangango, 42, and Julienne Mukabutera, 36, have all pleaded not guilty to *serious violations of international humanitarian rights*.

Their jury trial is being held here under a law that gives Belgian courts jurisdiction over human rights violations committed beyond its borders. Belgium is the former colonial power in Rwanda.

*"The problem," said Mukagasana, "went back to the day when the identity cards were created."*

*"Can you remind us who created the identity card?" asked the chief judge. "It was the Belgian colonial administration," she said.*

To establish its power, the Belgian coloniser instituted ethnic identity cards in 1933 with the designations *Hutu* and *Tutsi*, which did not previously exist and which officialised ethnic memberships. After the Belgian authorities and the Catholic Church, which had backed the Tutsi monarchy, did an about-face towards the end of the 1950s and defended the Hutu *socialist revolution*, the killing began, said the witness.

*My husband was orphaned at the age of 13 by the Tutsi massacres in 1963, she said. How did one become a consenting victim? asked the prosecutor.*

*When you see that all the media [referring to radio RTLM] are against you, you finally say to yourself, maybe I'm a discard of humanity. If I'm killed, maybe humanity will have peace, she answered. That's the climate in which I grew up, the climate in which my children were killed with machetes.*

*And who were the executioners? asked the judge.*

*The executioners were our friends, our neighbours, she said. I also met Tutsis who participated in the genocide, for fear of being killed themselves.*

Yolande Mukagasana, now a resident of Belgium, said she has committed her life today to bearing witness to the genocide in her native land, to listening to other survivors. She has written a book entitled, *Death Doesn't Want Me*, and is playing in a theatre production called *Rwanda 1994*.

*We have the impression that the world has not understood anything of what happened, she said. It remains to be seen if it ever will.*

Source: AFP.





*People stop talking.  
There is no sound  
save that of the wind shaking window panes.  
With his eyes clamped shut  
the man hails silence  
And silence replies  
with a swift blow  
to his gut.*

W S Rendra  
Indonesia

## **I have never felt safe in my life**

*Testimony on Militarisation in Burma*

*By a testifier who wishes to remain anonymous*

*I am from Burma, a country ruled by a series of military regimes since 1962 - one of the world's worst violators of human rights. In order to maintain control, the military regime has used disproportionate amounts of scarce cash for weapons, the armed forces and military intelligence, creating the highly militarised nature of Burmese society. This budgetary misappropriation coupled with the long-term civil war has resulted in a grossly inadequate public infrastructure, sub-standard health care and education systems and widespread poverty.*

*On behalf of many women from Burma, who cannot come here physically, I'm coming forward to tell you the impact of militarisation on women. As I have very limited time, I will tell you only a bit of my life under militarisation so that you can gauge the degree of the terror currently being waged in Burma; how women in Burma and along the border are living in a worse situation than I am and have been experiencing this terror until the time of speaking. If time allows, I will continue to relate what women's lives are like under militarisation.*

## A Tribunal for Our Dear Generals

### *Family separation*

*Since I was born, I have never had a time to live with my whole family together. From a very young age, my parents sent my elder brothers to a place where they could be safe from the fighting and recruitment from the army and also get a proper education. I was also sent to live with other relatives to go to school. We grew up separately without seeing one another often. While my brothers were at college, they joined the opposition-armed group and went underground. Years passed. Then my mother was very sick in the late 1980s. Her last wish was to see her sons. She passed away without seeing them. It was a difficult time for all members of the family, who really couldn't fulfill her last wish. Not long after, I myself also had to leave the country from fear of persecution by the military due to my active involvement in all the students' uprisings, particularly in the 1988 uprising. I couldn't go and visit my father when he was sick, and neither my brothers nor I could attend his funeral. All my family members still live far apart from one another.*

### *Under Surveillance*

*As civilians, we have been watched. Born in a politically active family, I've never felt safe in my life. I feel that our family is constantly watched by the military intelligence. When I was inside Burma, I dared not sleep well at night. Whenever I heard something in the middle of night, I thought the military men were at the door coming to interrogate my father. Up to now, even though I'm living out of Burma, I still have this fear. I feel I am under the constant suspicion of the military regime for sympathising or supporting their opposition. This suspicion produces constant fear and a sense of threat and insecurity to my daily life. Here, while I'm standing in front of you giving my testimony, I fear for my safety; I also fear for my family in Burma. I'm not sure what will happen to me and my family after this testimony.*

*All of a sudden tribunals on war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide have become the flavour of the season. Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Indonesia, Argentina, Chile, Israel are some of the countries that are in the news in this context and the question on some minds in this part of the world is - What about Burma, where the mother of all crimes against humanity is being committed for the fifth decade in a row now?*

The current round of media interest in such tribunals started in July with the dramatic arrest and deportation of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague, for his alleged role in mass killings of ethnic Albanian civilians in Kosovo. Also in the past few months:

- \* A group of Palestinian petitioners filed charges in a Brussels court against Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for his role in the massacre of Palestinian refugees by Israeli-backed Lebanese Phalangist militiamen in the Sabra and Shatila camps in 1982.
- \* A judge in Argentina sought testimony from Henry Kissinger, former US Secretary of State, for his role in the implementation of Operation Condor, a CIA-backed scheme in the 1970s in which Latin American regimes tracked down and assassinated dozens of political dissidents.
- \* The process of setting up a new tribunal to try former Khmer Rouge leaders for genocide passed legislative hurdles in Cambodia.
- \* The United Nations handed down war crimes indictments against four pro-Indonesian militiamen for the murder and forced deportation of thousands of East Timorese civilians during political violence in 1999.

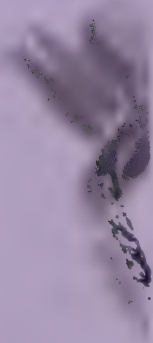


Before one attempts to seek answers to how Burma fits into this most interesting global trend, a few words are due about what the terms *crimes against humanity* and *genocide* really mean and how their definitions have evolved over the years. This is important in order to go beyond the mere use of these phrases as political abuse words and to understand the clear legal implications of bringing about such charges against the Burmese or other dictatorships.

In 1948, the Convention for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was voted into existence by the General Assembly of the United Nations, made genocide a crime under international law. The Convention defines genocide as *acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such*. Such acts include all of the following:

- a) killing members of the group;
- b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c) deliberately inflicting on the group, conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

So far in the world only three major instances of systematic mass murder have been recognized widely as constituting *genocide*. These are the genocide of the Armenians by the Young Turks in 1915; that of the Jews and Gypsies by the Nazis; and, in 1994, that of Tutsis by Hutu racists in Rwanda. Interestingly, in a new addition to this sordid list, the Hague Tribunal has just found Bosnian Serb General Radislav Krstic guilty of that crime for his alleged role in the killing of Muslim soldiers in Srebrenica in 1995.



Now we go sadly,  
as if our desire  
had sent us into absolute exile

Laura Ruiz Montes  
Cuba

*In conflict areas, women, particularly those whose male relatives are absent, are under constant suspicion, and that makes them targets for attack. The possibility of violence is never far away from reality. The threat of rape and sexual abuse of women restricts their freedom of movement and their capacity to accomplish their daily work. In addition to reinforcing fear and insecurity, they beat, torture, and/or kill if they suspect them as insurgents. So human rights abuses such as torture, killings, massacres, beatings, and mutilations are very common for women. There are also cases of forced labour and forced portering, which can prevent the families from working for their own survival. Other abuses like verbally terrorising people, demanding food, interrogating women, extorting money and stealing belongings are also common.*

*With the intention of promoting militarised society and ethnic cleansing, the military regime has launched the campaigns of forced relocation and forced confiscation throughout Burma. This has led to the influx of people - over half of them women and children - to flee to the neighbouring countries, particularly Thailand. While some groups are allowed to stay in the refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border, most of them enter Thailand as illegal migrant workers, again facing other types of abuses.*



## *Women are targets of attack because of their sex*

*Rape- another form of terror – acts as a tactical weapon. The culture of militarisation has enabled soldiers to rape women with impunity. Many soldiers and officers rape women and young girls to terrorise all women. By committing such acts regularly, the military regime instills fear not only in the communities where women are actually raped, but also in all other communities where women might be raped. Frequently, the rapes involve physical mutilation, with the brutality directed toward the gender of the victims.*

## *Landmine sweepers*

*The eastern border areas of Burma are amongst the most heavily mined areas in the world, surpassing Cambodia. There are reports of women being used as landmine sweepers by the soldiers.*

*All these mentioned above are just the tip of the iceberg. These have come to destabilise everyday life and the survival of Burmese women and their families. It is the everyday life experience of women from Burma. We don't know how long we women will have to suffer. At the time of my testimony, women are being raped by the so-called government troops, women are being used as landmine sweepers, as porters, as their comfort women, and they are tortured to give information about the opposition.*

*I wish women victims suffering from the above mentioned could come here to testify the crimes committed by the military regime for half a century.*

*Last but not the least, I appeal to this Court to convince the international community to put pressure on the military regime to return the power back to the people and bring peace to Burma so that we can return to our homeland, live free from violence and enjoy life as humans.*

In the case of Burma, applying the charge of *genocide* against various ethnic minority groups, may be difficult, since one would have to prove an intent on the part of the dictatorship to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group purely on racist grounds, and not just as part of a conflict over political ideology or territory alone. There are, of course, allegations that Burmese army soldiers operating in ethnic minority areas receive a higher salary for marriage with ethnic women, are encouraged to rape ethnic women, and indulge in systematic destruction of livelihoods of ethnic minority civilians by destroying infrastructure, crops, etc. - all of which point in the direction of *ethnic cleansing* and *genocide*. These charges will need to be examined closely.

The charge that is more interesting legally in the context of Burma and one relatively easier to prove against the dictatorship, is that of *crimes against humanity*. The charter of the International Military Tribunal (IMT), set up after the Second World War in Nuremburg to try Nazi officials, defines crimes against humanity as being *murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated.*

In the International Criminal Tribunals set up for Rwanda and former Yugoslavia, the list of the specific crimes contained within the meaning of crimes against humanity has been expanded to include rape and torture. The statute of the International Criminal Court, mooted by 120 countries in Rome in 1998, also expands the list of specific acts to include the crimes of enforced disappearance of persons and apartheid.

To some extent, the definition of what constitutes crimes against humanity overlaps with genocide and war crimes. But crimes against humanity are distinguishable from genocide in that they do not require an intent to destroy a particular group *in whole or in part*, as cited in the 1948 Genocide Convention. Instead, they cover crimes that only target a given group and carry out a policy of *widespread or systematic* violations. Crimes against humanity are also distinguishable from war crimes in that they apply not only in the context of war - they also apply in times of peace



.Some of the specific charges of *crimes against humanity* by the Burmese dictatorship, for which evidence exists or can and should be gathered, are:

*Murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against civilian populations* by the Burmese military during its campaigns against various ethnic rebel armies in the Shan, Karenni, Karen, Mon and Arakan states. There is plenty of evidence emerging from testimonies by fleeing refugees, defecting Burmese government troops and other sources of the Burmese army's arbitrary killings of ethnic minority civilians, burning of villages, use of forced labor, and systematic destruction of civilians' livelihoods, farms and crops. Harder evidence certainly exists in the form of video footage of the burning of civilian settlements in some of the rebel conflict areas by government forces. There are currently an estimated one to two million internally displaced civilians belonging to various ethnic minorities - most of them forcibly moved by the Burmese army and living in the most horrendous, life-threatening conditions inside Burma.

*Rape as a crime against humanity* is another charge that has been made against the Burmese military by various human rights groups. In a 1998 report titled "School for Rape", the human rights NGO Earth Rights International alleged that *women are raped as an integral part of the Burmese war against so-called insurgents, ethnic or otherwise*. While there are no proper estimates possible of the number of women who have been raped as a routine part of the Burmese army's operations in conflict areas, they are believed to be large enough to bring about charges of crimes against humanity against those running the Burmese army.

*Torture as a crime against humanity*. This one should be easy to prove given the personal experiences of dozens of prominent political prisoners still inside various Burmese prisons. Third-degree torture is a routine occurrence in Burmese prisons and, according to some former prisoners, the practice is directly responsible for the death of several detainees. In the conflict zones the reports of torture and sadistic treatment of civilians and combatants alike are much more numerous and need to be documented carefully.

The litany of charges mentioned above is only a very preliminary list and is only meant to indicate that even a cursory glance at the human rights situation in Burma is enough to press for a crime against humanity trial of the Burmese military top brass, apart from individual commanders at various levels. When, where and even whether such a tribunal will be formed and operate is currently an open question. But the WHY rationale for such a body clearly exists, and it is important to recognize and reiterate this fact again and again.

There are those who feel that raising such issues at a time when the Burmese military appears to be negotiating a peaceful transition of power with the opposition is not appropriate. The reply to this argument is that a) there are some things that are non-negotiable - in this case, the lives of the thousands of students, political dissidents, ethnic minorities and other ordinary citizens the Burmese military has killed; and, b) no political transition that fails to do justice to the grossest crimes of the past can ever lead to a stable and democratic future for any society - it will only perpetuate the culture of impunity that has made Burma what it is today.

**Source:** Ahmantlya  
The Irrawaddy, July 2001



It does not allow us  
to live or die as humans



*Testimony of an Atomic Bomb Survivor  
Teruko Yokoyama, Japan*

*My name is Teruko Yokoyama from Japan, and I am a survivor of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. I represent the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisations, which is called Nihon Hidankyo for short.*

*Thank you very much for inviting me to this World Court of Women against War, for Peace and for giving me an opportunity to testify against nuclear weapons in this nuclear-free country, South Africa. I have learnt that South Africa once developed and produced nuclear weapons but decided to dismantle and abandon them. Now, South Africa works for the abolition of nuclear weapons at an international level as a member of the New Agenda Group, which is made up of seven non-nuclear states. The abolition of nuclear weapons is possible if there is a political will to do so, and your country has proven it beautifully.*

No,  
I don't  
laugh  
at death.  
It's just  
that I'm  
not afraid to die  
among  
birds  
and trees

Javier Heraud Lima



## Beginning of the Nuclear Age

*The War is Over!*

The nuclear age began with the dropping of two atomic bombs by the United States on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. It is necessary first to focus on these two countries in order to understand how the concept of national security changed with the advent of nuclear war and to grasp the interrelatedness of this concept with the peaceful atom and the human experience with *radiation sickness*.

In March 1945, prior to Truman's inauguration, an American firebomb raid on Tokyo had killed 120,000 civilians. Many other Japanese cities had been bombed that spring, and the US ground forces had invaded Okinawa. In April, land fighting claimed 90,000 Japanese soldiers and 100,000 civilians. Japan was close to defeat. Its military leaders were trying to rally enough *spirit* for a decisive bloody battle on the Japanese mainland. The allied forces had already judged direct and massive killing of civilians as *acceptable* in wartime.

*It took us, the Hibakusha A-bomb victims, 11 years since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to raise ourselves from despair. Supported by the growing voices in Japan and all over the world against atomic and hydrogen bombs, we were able to form our organisation, Nihon Hidankyo, in 1956.*

*Until then, most of the Hibakusha had lived quiet and solitary lives, marginalised in the society. Many of us had to struggle to survive and get medical treatment for our burns and injuries and to get over the effects of radiation inflicted by the A-bombs. We suffered from discrimination in times of marriage, in having children or getting jobs. Because of the weak health of the Hibakusha, people did not want to employ them or marry and have children with them for fear of genetic effects. During this period, writing about or even talking about the damage caused by the A-bombs was prohibited by the press code imposed by the United States, which then occupied Japan.*

*But ever since the founding of our organisation, we the Hibakusha have spoken more openly about the damage and suffering caused by the A-bombs. We have appealed to the world to abolish nuclear weapons so that no one else in the world should go through the hellish suffering that we have experienced.*

*On August 6 and 9, 1945, only two atomic bombs instantly turned Hiroshima and Nagasaki into cities of death with their intense heat rays and blasts.*

*The two cities were full of heaps of red-burnt bodies, people with their eyeballs or inner organs protruding, and streetcars packed with passengers that were burnt black. Many people were burnt to death or trapped under fallen houses. Lines of ghost-like people took refuge out of the cities, with their hair frizzled, and the skin of their hands peeled and dangling at the tip of their fingers. These horrible and tragic sights witnessed by the eyes of Hibakusha were just hell on earth.*

*Within a few days, those who had once barely escaped from immediate death and those who entered these cities to look for their families or to engage in relief work fell one after another with the effects of radiation, losing their hair, vomiting blood.*



*My father was working in a middle school and was in a classroom located at 1.2 kilometres from the blast centre. With the enormous blast, he was blown over the schoolyard down to the bottom of a hill. He lay unconscious and was left there for three days before someone rescued him.*

*My mother and baby sister were in the yard of our house, 4 kilometres from the centre of the blast. Inside the house, a chest of drawers fell, and the fragments of the windowpane stuck all over the straw mattresses on the floor. Father did not come back even when evening came, and all my mother could see in the direction of the city where my father was supposed to be was a bright sea of fire raging up into the sky.*

*My father was brought back home with serious injuries. His face was bloated like a balloon from burns, his eyelids swollen and closing his eyesight, and his lips sore and exposed. He did not look like a human being. Fortunately he survived, but he lost the sight in his right eye. After that, he always suffered from chronic sluggishness and repeated hospitalisation with liver and thyroid problems. He died from lung cancer in 1975 at the age of 72.*

*My little sister, who was 1 year and 4 months old at the time of the bombing, started to have a problem in her throat about one month later. She wheezed and gasped for air. She went through surgery but was left with a hoarse voice, just like an old woman. She spent the rest of her life mostly in the hospital with various diseases. She could not finish her school education. The only pleasure she found in her hospital life was reading and handicrafts. Her condition got serious when she was 40, and she became bedridden. She lost her eyesight in both eyes and died in the darkness at the age of 44. Whenever I remember my sister, I wonder, for what was she born? I feel intolerable sorrow and anger. If only the A-bomb was not used, her life could have been completely different.*

*My mother died in 1972 from stomach cancer when she was 64, after long years of nursing my father and sister.*

The decision to drop the atomic bomb came shortly after Harry Truman was inaugurated as President of the United States on 12 April 1945, following the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. On 4 July 1945, in joint agreement with the British and Canadians, he authorised a test of the bomb in preparation for its use against the Japanese. The *Manhattan Project*, which developed the bomb, was so secret that even the US Congress did not know about it. It is reported that Truman, who had been Vice-President under Franklin D. Roosevelt, was told about it only after he was sworn in as President. On 7 July 1945 the Emperor of Japan asked the Soviet government to mediate peace between Japan and the United States. Molotov replied that they would *study* the question.

At 5.30 a.m. on 16 July 1945, a plutonium bomb was detonated in the US desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico. Plans to drop it went ahead in spite of the reservations and warnings of men like General Dwight Eisenhower and the atomic scientists who had designed and built the bomb. Those who witnessed the first atomic explosion explained it in religious terms. A *New York Times* reporter likened it to the second coming of Christ, and a semi-official report went so far as to say: "*Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief.*" The military operation was called *Trinity*.

Truman received a full report of the detonation on 21 July 1945 while at the Potsdam Conference, and he sent a written message to Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, which read: *Babies satisfactorily born*. On the same day, 21 July, sixty atomic scientists signed a petition saying the bomb should not be used against Japan unless a convincing warning was given and there was an opportunity to surrender. Truman, from Potsdam, uttered his ultimatum to Japan on 26 July: *Surrender unconditionally or be destroyed*. Pamphlets were dropped all over Japan threatening *an enormous air bombardment*, but the nature of the new bomb was not described. *We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation*, said the Potsdam Declaration, but this message was not conveyed to the Japanese people.



The bomb, referred to as *Little Boy*, was assembled on 1 August. On 2 August, the Japanese Foreign Minister was sent to Japanese Ambassador Sato in Moscow with the message: *It is requested that further efforts be exerted ... Since the loss of one day may result in a thousand years of regret, it is requested that you immediately have a talk with Molotov.*

On the morning of 6 August 1945, Colonel Paul W. Tibbets Jr, of Miami, Florida, flying in the *Enola Gay* (named for his mother in Iowa) gave the order to drop *Little Boy* on Hiroshima. Major Thomas W. Ferebee of Mockville, North Carolina, released the bomb. It was a sunny day; no fighter planes rose to oppose them. The people had taken shelter, but when only two planes were seen, the all-clear signal sounded. The bomb exploded about 630 yards above the Shima Hospital, near the centre of the city. At the time of the explosion, people had resumed their morning chores or made their way to work.

The fireball was 18,000 feet across, with a temperature of about 100 million degrees Fahrenheit at the centre. People who looked at the fireball were blinded. More than four square miles of this city of 130,000 people were completely destroyed. Houses collapsed from blast pressure or were destroyed by the fire, which burnt for two days. About 88,255 buildings - stores, churches, hospitals, fire stations, police stations, schools, offices and blocks of flats - were destroyed. Some people near the centre of the explosion literally evaporated; others were turned into charred corpses. Survivors experienced burns which caused their skin to peel off immediately; some had skin hanging from the ends of their fingers. Those who lived to tell the story said that the victims looked like ghosts.

*I was 4 years old in 1945 and had been evacuated outside the city. On the ninth day after the bombing, I was taken by my grandmother back to Nagasaki, which was still full of radiation from the A-bomb. I cannot forget my shock on entering my hometown, completely ruined and turned into a city of death and horror. I myself have been suffering from intense anaemia ever since.*

*The atomic bomb inflicted the worst damage on the weakest. By the end of 1945, 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki died. Sixty-five percent of those killed were elderly, children and women - all civilians.*

*I want to present to you the experiences of some of my Hibakusha friends.*

*Ms. Sakue Shimohira was 10 years old and inside the air raid shelter with her little sister, 800 metres from ground zero. They found their mother and big sister burnt to death at home. Their big brother, who was a medical student, came to look for them from outside the city, but a few days later, even without direct burns or injuries, he died, murmuring, I don't want to die, I don't want to die... It was acute radiation sickness that killed him. Sakue and her sister struggled to survive, suffering the effects of the A-bomb, without clothes to wear, food to eat or a house to live in. They often regretted not having died at the same time as their mother. Sakue's sister suffered a long time from the surgery on her wound, which would not close and heal, and finally, she threw herself before a moving train and died. Sakue was the only one of her family who survived, but she found the strength to live on and has told her story to many young people who come to Nagasaki. She has also travelled to many parts of the world to share her experiences.*

*Mr. Nobuyuki Mitsuishi was not yet born on the day of the bombing but was in his mother's womb. She was three-months pregnant then and at 1.8 kilometres from the blast centre when the bomb was dropped. Mr. Mitsuishi was born with microcephaly due to the effect of the bomb. His head was small, his physical development delayed, and he also had mental retardation. He was neglected by his mother and brothers and had to live his adult life alone, with multiple health problems. He always wanted to live as ordinary people do in a warm home, but his life ended at age 47. Many children who were still foetuses in their mothers' wombs were miscarried, stillborn, or died young.*



Mr. Senji Yamaguchi was a high school student and about to become 15. With his shirt off, he was working outside of a weapons factory where he had been mobilised to work, 1.2 kilometres from ground zero. Instantly, the whole of his upper body was burnt by the heat rays of the A-bomb. The burns on his body were infested with maggots and caused him great pain. It was a miracle he survived, but the burns from the A-bomb left him with keloid scars, and his mouth was stretched and deformed. His right ear was shrunk due to the melted cartilage, and his face was burned and made ugly. Until today, he has faced repeated hospitalisation with surgery on the keloids, skin cancer, liver disease and leucopenia. But despite all his difficulties, he has dedicated his life to the elimination of nuclear weapons and has appealed to the people of the entire world to create a nuclear-free world. He now serves as the Co-Chairperson of our organisation, Nihon Hidankyo.

Atomic bombs do not allow humans to live or die as humans. Nuclear weapons are the weapons of insanity, aimed only at extermination, and we cannot allow these weapons of absolute evil to continue to exist.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice in Hague rendered an advisory opinion, which stated that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons was illegal under international law. And at the Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty held in May 2000, the final year of the 20th century, the five declared nuclear weapons states agreed on the Final Documents, which call for an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish complete elimination of their nuclear weapons. This gave us a light of hope after our long struggle. Now we must press them to fulfill their promise.

Japanese newspapers did not fully report the bombing or the immediate fatalities of about 70,000 people. One short item read that Hiroshima had been hit with incendiary bombs and *"it seemed that some damage was caused to the city and its vicinity."*

Molotov returned to Moscow after the Potsdam Conference and after the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. On 8 August 1945 he called Japanese Ambassador Sato and announced that Soviet Russia was declaring war on the Japanese, thus fulfilling his promise made at the Yalta Conference and making a Japanese-USA negotiated peace impossible.

On 9 August 1945 a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and on 11 August 1945 the Japanese Emperor accepted the Potsdam peace terms. This second bomb was constructed from plutonium, while the Hiroshima bomb had been constructed from uranium. Apparently, there was a deliberate plan to study the effects of the two different types of bombs. The Nagasaki bomb exploded about 555 yards above the ground, near the University of Nagasaki Medical School.

The surrender was announced to the world on 14 August 1945. A small book was published in Japan in 1950. In it 164 A-bomb survivors told their stories and made a strong poignant plea for *no more wars*. The book was suppressed by the occupation forces and not rediscovered until April 1981. *The survivors wrote of the human bodies they had seen, swollen and charred, with skin peeling off and hanging down; the silent, suffering blind people sitting by the river or throwing themselves into the river to relieve the intense pain. They wrote of those who were trapped in collapsed structures, children hurled for hundreds of feet by the fierce winds, family members evaporated or forever scarred and disfigured by keloids. They described their skin as bean curds and their mouths as gelatin. Yet they could bear no grudge against the Americans who had dropped the bomb. Many blamed their own emperor for causing the horror. Most A-bomb victims became radically Pacifist, realising very quickly that the presence of nuclear bomb in the world was now unthinkable. Unfortunately, the people of the world were denied access to the Japanese experience. No healing could take place because the wounds were denied and hidden.*



The US occupation forces used over 85,000 feet of 16 mm film to document the tragedy. This film lay unused in the US archives, unavailable to the public until 1980. The Japanese YMCA has raised about \$375,000 (US) since 1980 to purchase this film for peace documentaries in the hope of preventing any future use of nuclear bombs.

The complete atomic death toll has never been tallied. The 30-year report to the United Nations in 1975 estimated fatalities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at 240,000. Even as late as 1978, more than 2,000 cancer deaths of survivors that year were attributed to the bombing in 1945. *Civilian casualties in Hiroshima and Nagasaki exceeded the total number of the US military killed during the Second World War, in both Europe and the Pacific sector.*

President Truman summed up the military philosophy behind the bombing: *We found the bomb and used it.* He no doubt thought the show of *power* would end all wars, but in fact it ushered in a period of unprecedented military spending on the arms race and a policy of *mutually assured destruction* among nations with nuclear capability. A surprise nuclear attack would totally destroy a nation. Thus retaliation, if it was to occur at all, must take place in the time interval between enemy launching of weapons and their arrival at the target. This new situation demands constant mobilisation for war, the escalation of weapon design as a *deterrent*, and the disappearance of peacetime economy as experienced prior to 1939.

*Since 1945 the world has been in hostage to a nuclear war truce.*

**Source:** No Immediate Danger - Prognosis for a Radioactive Earth , Rosalie Bertell



*Japan's war of aggression inflicted enormous suffering, deaths and damage on the people of Asia. The worst form of crime against women was the military comfort women system. Our task in Japan is to make our own government acknowledge clearly the responsibility of its war of aggression, reject all wars, and become a nuclear-free country. Abolition of nuclear weapons is the only way to ensure that there should be no more Hibakusha like us.*

*Peace cannot be achieved or protected by armaments but must be created by cooperative efforts of the people all over the world. Peace is the most precious legacy we can hand over to our future generations.*

*Friends, let us rally the conscience and wisdom of the entire human race and work together to give our children in this new century a peaceful world, set free of nuclear weapons and war.*

*Allow me to give to the jury some material and documents to support my testimony and the thousand paper cranes, a symbol of peace in Japan, which were folded by the Hibakusha.*

*Thank you.*



I gave birth to something  
that was unrecognisable



*Testimony on Nuclear Testing in the Pacific  
Almira Matayoshi, Rongelap Atoll,  
Republic of the Marshall Islands.*

*When children are born  
They're given names  
Chosen from the treasured family tree;*

*When my children are born  
They're greeted with affectionate tears  
And the shiver of fear.  
When my children are born  
Their tiny coffins are waiting for them*

**Samih Al- Qasim  
Palestine.**

*My name is Almira Matayoshi. I am from Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands. From 1946-1958 the islands of Bikini and Enewetak in the Marshall Islands were used by the United States military as nuclear test sites. A total of 67 hydrogen and atomic bombs were detonated on these tiny islands. On March 1st, 1953 the largest of the hydrogen bombs, code name Bravo, was detonated on Bikini Atoll. The intensity of it partially destroyed Bikini, vaporised three neighbouring atolls, created in the lagoon a crater a mile wide in diameter and sent upward cloud 114,000 feet in the sky.*

*Rongelap lies a couple of hundred miles southeast of Bikini. On the morning of March 1, I was awakened by a loud thunderous sound, which seemed to come from every direction. The horizon lit up with intense bright lights of every colour of the rainbow. Many other inhabitants of Rongelap were already awake and doing their usual morning chores. The loud explosion was not such a big surprise since the inhabitants were aware of the tests, however they did not know the exact time. Unlike previous times when we were evacuated to safety prior to nuclear tests, on this day we were at home. No one was thinking of finding shelter or taking precaution after the explosion. Several hours later, the sky darkened and a yellow powdery substance steadily descended upon the children playing outdoors and the men in their fishing canoes. It fell and contaminated our drinking water supply and all vegetation. It covered everything, leaving a residue two inches thick. The health aide cautioned against drinking the water.*

*We were alarmed when the children and our elderly began to feel weak. They experienced symptoms of burning, itchiness all over the body as if one was being pricked with thousands of needles, shaking chills alternated with extreme fever, nausea and blisters in the mouth. These were strange ailments, never experienced before.*

*The next day, a US military ship arrived to transport everyone to safety! Military airplanes evacuated the expectant mothers. I was one of them. Everyone was instructed not to take along a single personal article or memento. We left our homeland with only the clothes on our backs.*

*Those of us who travelled on the ship were unceremoniously hoisted on board in a manner similar to cargo loading. Adults and children alike were thrown in the net basket and in mid-air hosed down with such a powerful hose, as if to wash away the radioactive substance before the body absorbed it!*



## Nuclear Testing in the Marshall Islands

The Pacific Ocean nuclear test blast on 1 March 1954, resulting in the extraordinary fallout in the Marshall Islands that caused acute radiation sickness, was a 17 megaton blast, *about 1,000 times the force of the bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. It was the largest detonation of a hydrogen bomb. The navy reported that a shift in the wind caused the radioactive cloud to drift over the inhabited islands, but this shift has been denied by several of the US weathermen who were on Rongerik and who reported every four hours to the military command post on Enewetak.

The people of Rongelap, about 100 miles from Bikini, received the fallout first, about four to six hours after the blast. It took another hour to reach the twenty-eight American weathermen on Rongerik and twenty-two hours to reach Utirik (about 280 miles from Bikini). The blast itself was 100 miles off the coast of Rongelap, so no one on Rongelap suffered blast and/or fire effects of the bomb, as had been the case in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Their injuries and diseases were the direct result of radioactive fallout.

There was a cloak of military secrecy over the incident, so none of the acute immediate health effects are attributable to *scare tactics* by the media or to public panic. The people had no information about the testing. No precise measuring of the individual exposures was undertaken but it was assumed to be quite high, ranging from a total gamma dose of 14 rem in Utirik to 175 rem in Rongelap. This could be compared with the 5 to 12 rem permissible exposure for nuclear workers over the course of a year, or the 0.5 rem per year allowed for the general public.

Thus the Bikini hydrogen bomb exploded, escalating the nuclear arms race from the kiloton to the megaton range. With some demented sense of humour, the bikini bathing suit was named for the atoll whose middle was blown away in the hydrogen bomb blast.

*The children cried from the stinging pressure of the water, and the already ill adults shivered with cold. In full view of everyone, we were instructed to discard the old clothing. This was in total disregard to our customs. Recounting this incident to this day makes my heart feels very heavy.*

*We knew we had been exposed to radiation. Children and adults alike were sick. We immediately developed blisters in the mouth and all over the body.*

*Our hair fell out in big clumps and exposed blistery scalps.*

*During the subsequent years, we suffered illnesses that are well known to be cancer caused by radiation exposure. The rate of thyroid cancer among the people is very high. Our women have suffered tremendously. They have suffered numerous miscarriages, premature deliveries, and have given birth to babies with indescribable deformities. They have given birth to physically and mentally handicapped children. Our reproductive systems have been altered.*

*I myself gave birth to something that was unrecognisable. I had five children; one is physically underdeveloped. I have recently been diagnosed with swollen thyroid that requires monitoring. I reside in Hawaii in order to be closer to my physician and better medical facility.*

*I, as well as the others, would like to return to our homeland of Rongelap Atoll, but we cannot. The soil is still too contaminated for safe human resettlement. When we evacuated our homeland in 1954 we hoped to return in the near future. That was not so. Many of our elders have passed away without ever again setting foot on the soil of their homeland. In our heart, HOPE thrives that one day Rongelap Atoll will be rid of most contaminants and therefore be safe for our return.*

*It is an honour for me to share my story with you all. We are women and mothers, representatives of our various countries, cultures, communities and families. We are the strength, the backbones of our societies.*

*Together we can bring an end to all wars for Peace! God bless you all!*

*Thank you.*



During the first five years after the radiation exposure of the Marshallese, there was a significant increase in miscarriages and stillbirths among exposed Rongelap women. When the number of offspring deaths increases, we can assume that the proportion of damaged but viable children also increases. But these slightly damaged survivors were never identified by the researchers, so there is no count. It took about nine years for researchers to notice the high rate of growth retardation and thyroid abnormalities in the Rongelap children.

The Bikinians had been evacuated from their island homes before the nuclear tests. The American military governor of the Marshall Islands, Commodore Ben Wyatt, went to the island before the Pacific nuclear tests began and spoke to 167 islanders at the closing of their Sunday religious service on 10 February 1946. According to official navy records, Wyatt compared the Bikinians to the Children of Israel whom the Lord had saved from the enemy and led into the Promised Land'. He asked them if they would be willing to sacrifice their island for *the good of all men*. Chief Juda later reported to the Commodore the decision reached by the Bikini islanders: *If the US Government and the scientists of the world want to use our island and atoll for further development, which with God's blessing will result in kindness and benefit to all mankind, my people will go elsewhere*. The Bikinians had been awed by the US defeat of Japan, and Wyatt's description of the atomic bomb led them to believe that they were unable to resist any wish of the US military.

**Source:** "No Immediate Danger: Prognosis for a Radioactive Earth" Rosalie Bertell

## The Snows of Rongelap

Remember the children of Rongelap, which is one of the islands in the Pacific. They had, of course, never seen snow until March 1, 1954. When small, white powdery material began to fall out of the sky. It was one and a half inches thick on the ground, in some places. No one knew what it was and the children romped and played in it. Forty-eight hours later, US military personnel arrived and informed people that the white fallout was from the thermo nuclear device exploded on the Bikini Atoll about one hundred miles from Rongelap. The people were to be evacuated immediately; they were not to eat the fish; the coconuts were contaminated, they could not drink the water, the white rain was poison; the snow was fire.

*What does the right to life mean in our times?*

The radioactive fallout over the inhabited islands caused acute radiation sickness in people. More than 90 per cent of the Rongelap children suffered from loss of hair and scalp lesions; there was a high rate of growth retardation and thyroid abnormalities. In 1972, Lekoj Anjain died of leukemia. He was 19 years old. Lekoj had suffered acute radiation sickness, skin burns and loss of hair at the time of the nuclear explosion but had seemed to recover. When 13 years old, he had surgery for thyroid nodules. His mother, father and two brothers also had thyroid surgery. He had been the youngest child on Rongelap at the time of the bombing.

He was one year old when he played in the snow.

What did the right to life mean to Lekoj? And to the sixteen million victims already produced by the world's nuclear industries and weapons testing?

They are, writes Bertell, the first victims of the third world war. They are victims of the nuclear industry, who in the name of national security, of balance of power, of *deterrence* or even in the name of *peace* and *development* push the world to a nuclear edge. For the nuclear estates in all social systems abrogate all our fundamental freedoms [for example the right to information, or the increasing surveillance from the state that the peace and environmental movements are coming under] enshrined in the UN charter and in almost all national constitutions.

How would the International Covenant on Genocide translate in a world of nuclear weapons? For however *limited* a nuclear war is it would obliterate whole nationalities, whole civilisations. What of the UN Human Rights Charter and other legislation that upholds the right to life, regulating humanity's crimes against humanity? Must the world wait for the use of these weapons of death before they are considered crimes? Is not the very threat to use them, test them, manufacture them, and stockpile them criminal?

**Source:** "South Wind" Corinne Kumar, India



Session II

## Wars without Borders

*This century has seen too the other faces of modern wars – wars in times of peace. Women who spoke at this session testified to these invisible wars of poverty, of development, the wars against subsistence that are unleashing new forms of violence against the poor, the vulnerable, the women.*

*Visual Testimony*

**Expert Witness:**  
Vandana Shiva, India

**Testimonies:**

Ok Saval, Cambodia  
Christina, Uganda  
Mayda Alvarez Sudrez, Cuba  
Mariama Koroma, Sierra Leone  
Nobesemsile Fani, South Africa  
Om Ali, Palestine/Jordan

*Trafficking*  
*Trafficking/refugee*  
*Economic Blockade*  
*War of resources/amputee*  
*Extreme Deprivation/Poverty*  
*Refugee/Poverty*

## Dr. Vandana Shiva, India

### *Expert Witness*



*We thought we had put slavery, holocausts and apartheid behind us - that humanity would never again allow dehumanisation and violent systems to shape the rules by which we live and die.*

*Yet globalisation is giving rise to a **new slavery, a new holocaust, and a new apartheid**. It is a war unleashed against nature, women and children and poor people. It is a war which is transforming every community, every home, every person, every living being into a war zone. It is a war of monocultures against diversity, of gigantism against smallness, of wartime technologies against nature.*

*Technologies of war are becoming the basis of production in peacetime. Agent Orange, sprayed on Vietnam, is now being sprayed on our farms as herbicide along with **Round-up**, and other poisons. Plants and animals are being genetically engineered, making our fields, sites of biological warfare. And perverse intelligence is being applied to terminate life's cycles of renewal by engineering **terminator seeds** to be sterile.*

*As the violence grows, the stress to which societies, ecosystems and living beings are being subjected is reaching levels of breakdown. We are surrounded by processes of ecological and social breakdown.*

*Witness the events of our times, which occupy front-page news currently: cows in Europe going mad, millions of animals being burnt as the foot and mouth disease spreads due to increase in trade, farmers in India committing suicide by the thousands, the Taliban destroying their own country's heritage by destroying the Bamiyan Buddhas, a 15 year-old-boy Charles Andrew Williams shooting his classmates in a Californian high school, **ethnic cleansing everywhere**.*

*All these are wars of peacetime, taking place in our daily lives and last expressions of violence in a system.*

*Cows are herbivores; they are not cannibals, and they are not meant to eat their own carcasses. But in an industrial system of factory farming that is globalised and under free trade rules of agriculture, it was efficient to grind the meat of infected sheep and cows to turn it into cattle feed. This has spread BSE- a self-infection, which is also being transmitted to humans.*



*Children should be playing with their schoolmates. Schools are not supposed to be war zones, but a culture of guns and violence, combined with a culture that has focused so exclusively on commerce and economic growth and material accumulation has left the future generations, uprooted and unanchored, afraid and violent, and childhood is being robbed from our children in affluence and in poverty. In Iraq, 12 children die every hour because of a trade embargo. In other regions children are being pushed into prostitution or warfare as the only option for survival when societies break down. Across the Third World, hunger and malnutrition has grown as a result of structural adjustment and trade liberalisation policies. During the period of 1979-78 and 1992-93 calorie intake declined by 3.05% in Mexico, 4.15% in Argentina, 10.9% in Kenya, 10.0% in Tanzania, and 9.9% in Ethiopia. In India the per capita cereal consumption declined by 12.2% for rural areas and 5.45% for urban areas.*

*Denying food to the hungry, to feed markets, are the genocidal aspects of globalisation.*

*It is illegal for countries to ensure the hungry are fed because this involves laws, policies and financial commitments, which are declared protectionist - the ultimate crime in the globalisation regime.*

*Denying medicine to the ill for the super profits of global pharmaceutical industry is another aspect of genocide. Under the TRIPs agreement WTO countries have to implement patent laws granting exclusive, monopolistic rights to the pharmaceutical and biotech industry. This prevents countries from producing low cost generic drugs. Patented HIV/AIDS medicine costs \$15,000; generic drugs made by India and Brazil costs \$250-300 for a year's treatment. Patents are therefore literally robbing AIDS victims of their lives.*

*However, in the perverse world of globalisation dictated by commerce and profits, it is not the denial of right to life to victims of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases that is illegal but providing cures through affordable medicine. India, Brazil and South Africa have all been taken to WTO Court (The Dispute Settlement Mechanisms) for having laws that allow low cost medicine to be produced. At the World Court of Women, we declare that laws that force governments to deny their citizens the right to food and the right to medicine are genocidal and will not be tolerated. They must be changed.*

*Globalisation is a violent system imposed and maintained through the use of violence. As trade is elevated above human needs, the insatiable appetites of global markets for resources is met by unleashing new wars over resources. The war over diamonds in Sierra Leone and over oil in Nigeria has snatched the lives of thousands of women and children.*

*The transfer of people's resources to global corporations also makes states more militaristic as they arm themselves on behalf of commercial interests and start wars against their own people. Violence has been used by the government against struggles of tribal people in areas where Bauxite mining is taking place in Orissa and in Koel Karo where they had succeeded in stopping a dam.*



But it is not just non-renewable resources like diamonds, oil and minerals, which global corporations want to own. They want to own our biodiversity and water. They want to transform the very fabric and basis of life into private property. IPRs on seeds and plants, animals and human genes are aimed at transforming life into the property of corporations. While falsely claiming that they have invented life forms and living organisms, corporations are also claiming patents on knowledge pirated from the Third

World. The knowledge of our mothers and grandmothers is now being claimed as inventions of western corporations and scientists. The use of Neem (*Azadirachta Indica*) for pesticide and fungicide was claimed by a U.S. corporation called Ricetec. And these are only some of the blatant examples of biopiracy, which will lead to absurd situations where the Third World pays for knowledge that our ancestors evolved cumulatively and collectively.

Technologies of war  
are becoming the  
basis of production  
in peacetime

From the Women's Court we declare that **patents on life and patents based on biopiracy are immoral and illegal**. They should not be respected because they violate universal principles of reverence for life and the integrity of culture's knowledge systems.

We will not live by rules that are robbing millions of lives and medicines, their seeds, plants and knowledge, their sustenance and dignity and their food. We will not allow greed and violence to be treated as the only values to shape our culture and our lives.

**We will take back our lives**, as we took back the night. We know that violence begets violence and fear, peace begets peace and love begets love.

We will reweave the world as a place of sharing and caring, of peace and justice, not a marketplace where sharing, caring and giving protection are crimes and peace and justice are unthinkable. **We will shape new universals through solidarity, not hegemony.**

Women's worlds are worlds based on protection—of our dignity and self-respect, the well being of our children, of the earth, of her diverse beings, of those who are hungry and those who are ill. To protect is the best expression of humility. For the men who run global corporations, the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF, the G-7 governments, have tried to transform **protection** into a dirty word. The worst crimes of the global market place are protecting health, nutrition, and livelihoods through calls for trade sanctions and punishments by WTO and the World Bank.

To those who have tried to make the protection of life a crime, we say echoing Archbishop Tutu,

**You have already lost. You need to get out of the way so that we can protect each other, our children and life on this planet.**

The future does not belong to the **Merchants of Death**—it belongs to the **Protectors of Life**.



## A cycle of debt, fear, violence and exploitation



*Testimony on Sex Trafficking  
Ok Saval, Cambodia*

*I want  
to confront my fears  
to dive long and deep  
in mother sea  
draw strength and love.  
and paint my face  
to whom it may concern  
I'm proud!*

Gabriela Pearse

*It is my testimony that you will hear, but my story echoes the suffering of thousands of Cambodian women.*

*My name is Val.*

*I am a member of the National Prevention of Trafficking Awareness Team, travelling throughout Cambodia to raise awareness about the tricks, the exploitation and deceitfulness of trafficking.*

*I am a leader of a sex workers Union in Kompong Cham, Central Cambodia.*

*I am a mother, a daughter, and a sister.*

*I am a sex worker.*

*My parents negotiated marriage for me at the age of 15 and forced me to marry a soldier thirteen years my senior.*

*My first child was born a year after the wedding, followed by a second child a year later. Shortly after that my husband died. I became a widow.*

*At the age of eighteen, I was once again coerced to marry a violent man who threatened to kill my family if my mother refused.*

*From the beginning, my life with this man was one encounter after another of physical and emotional violence and abuse. He frequently used a gun to threaten and intimidate me.*

*Everyone in the village condoned his behaviour and blamed me for the beatings I received daily. They said I was a bad woman and deserved to be beaten. This went on for two years.*

## Sex Work in Cambodia

*Many women and children have been trafficked from rural areas in Cambodia and neighbouring countries to Cambodian cities, especially Phnom Penh.*

*A government human rights committee has estimated that there are more than 14,000 women and children working in prostitution in brothels, nightclubs, massage parlours, private houses, and hotels in Phnom Penh. Research carried out by the Cambodian Women's Development Agency (CWDA) indicated that there are between 50,000 to 55,000 women in prostitution in the whole of Cambodia.*

*The NGO, Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia, has conducted a rapid appraisal of the situation, which indicated that 35 per cent of the women in prostitution in the whole of Cambodia are under 18 years old and 40 per cent are Vietnamese. Statistics from the Cambodian Women's Crisis Centre (CWCC) indicated that 64 per cent of the women were forced into prostitution; 53 per cent of them were deceived by promises of well paid jobs; 11 per cent were sold by parents, relatives and friends; less than one per cent were abducted; and 35 per cent went into it because of poverty. The traffickers offer girls and women jobs in garment factories or as domestic workers, or they convince them to visit Phnom Penh city. Sometimes they go by themselves to earn money to settle debts or to pay for medical treatment of other members in the family.*

**Source:** Prostitution Situation in Cambodia, Sam Vuthy, Cambodian Women's Development Agency

*I escaped - with someone who promised I could get work and accommodation in Banteay Meanchey, a province near the Thai Cambodian border. Unknown to me, the person who helped me was to profit by selling me to the restaurant owner. They exploited my vulnerability; he took my money and received further profit for delivering me.*

*I started washing dishes in the restaurant. This did not last long. I was deceptively drawn into a situation whereby I could not survive and became completely dependent and at the mercy of the owner of the restaurant where I worked and lived with my children.*

*This was the beginning of the deception. My boss coerced me to work as a karaoke singer in his friend's karaoke bar. To feed my children, and out of fear and intimidation, I agreed to go and sing.*

*On my first night, two men took turns raping me. I was terrified and powerless. When I protested and attempted to resist, they looked at me and said, you are just a prostitute.*

*After that, I was forced to sleep with men every night. My children were held at ransom, and I never received a salary for two years. During periods of illness, I was forced to work - sing and receive clients, receive mental and physical abuse and torture. I could not run, I could not protest because I feared for the life of my children and myself. It is easy to dispose of life in my country. Even easier in the north, where there was still a state of conflict.*

*After two years of repaying my so-called debts to the restaurant owner and karaoke bar owner, I was sold to another karaoke sex bar in the province of Kompong Cham, Central Cambodia. Once again it was a cycle of debt, fear, violence and exploitation.*

*This has been my life for the last ten years.*



## Poverty and Prostitution in Asia: Redefining Some Categories

With the growing globalisation of the international economy, sex tourism has become an integral part of the transnational service sector resulting in the transnationalisation of women's sexual labour as well. What we are observing then is a borderlessness of prostitution where women and girls are trafficked across nations and continents. Recently the police in Thailand rescued eleven Colombian women who were being held forcibly in a brothel in Bangkok and were en route to Hong Kong. An army of largely white-collar, male workers of the corporate labour force from the industrialised world throng to these *exotic venues* in the *orient* to be serviced by *soft, subservient and smiling* maidens of the East, who according to Life Travel a Swiss travel agency, are also *slim, sun burnt and sweet, and love the white man in an erotic and dedicated way* and who, according to a Dutch tour agency are ... *little slaves who give Thai warmth*. A German marriage and travel bureau goes even further and declares that these women can be pleased with a kilogram of grapes when with our women even a fur coat doesn't do the trick.

• *Military aggression* and manoeuvres such as the Vietnam war and the establishment of military and naval bases all over Southeast and East Asia during the Cold War drew upon the sexual labour of Asian women to provide *Rest and Recreation* services to large armies of U.S. GI's and foreign men in the recent past. Today, in this subtle but pernicious phase of *economic aggression*, Asian women provide *R and R* services to an army of male workers from the developed world. It is known that Japanese companies such as Casio Computers and some American multinational companies operating overseas treat their personnel to special bonus trips in the form of packaged sex tours to the Philippines, Thailand, Taiwan and South Korea.

The manner in which the sexual labour of women and children is plugged into the market in these societies is essentially a function of the North-South divide in the context of the political-economic forces at the global level. It is also a function of the path of economic development, which these Third World nations have directly or indirectly been coerced into following. Therefore, both poverty and this new form of prostitution are consequences of the kind of economic development fostered in the south by powerful blocks in the North. Patriarchy, of course, plays its part, but only in conjunction with and often in subservience to the above forces. To highlight this point, I would like to point out that over the last few years, both in Thailand and Nepal, the communities that send the majority of girls to urban brothels have started celebrating the birth of daughters. This was never the practice in the past, I was repeatedly told, since there has always been a preference for the male child, even though not very blatant. A new little ditty has become popular in the Pan district of Northern Thailand; it enjoins the parents of the new born baby girl to rejoice because she brings with her gold and silver.

Given the above understanding, how then can feminist groups and activists of the North show solidarity with those of the South? Certainly not by merely viewing these women and minors as victims of sexual violence and thereby evoking a global sisterhood against the diabolical conspiracy of patriarchy. It is crucial for women's groups in the West to recognise more effectively the role of their governments in the *economic and military aggression* of the South and subsequent marginalisation and degradation of communities, of their women and children, and to identify concrete strategies of action.

**Source:** Extracts from Poverty and Prostitution in Asia: Redefining some Categories - Jyothi Sanghera, GAATW.





Our beliefs are  
One country  
Our hair is  
One flag  
Our love of ourselves  
Is our freedom

Alice Walker

## I cannot afford to go back home



Testimony on the Vulnerability of Being a Refugee  
*Christina, Central Africa*

*I am a refugee from Central Africa. I lost my husband in civil war. I'm a mother of four. Because of the war and the fear for the life of my children and mine, I had to leave my country. I fled to Malawi without a job, husband, or family. Life was extremely difficult. Then I met this South African truck driver who became very nice to me and treated my children as if they were his own. He promised to marry me, to get me a job and rent for us a house but only if I agreed to come with him to South Africa. I immediately agreed.*

*Once in South Africa, he rented a house for us in Johannesburg and we lived happily. But after about three months, things started to change. Whenever he came home from his long journeys, he would take me out to drink and when we came back home he'd demand anal sex. If I refused he would beat me up and force me to accept the pain and the humiliation. Every time I tried to resist he got his male friends in and together they abused me and gave him money. He promised he would kill me if I said anything to anyone.*

*Since my stay was illegal, I was forced to remain quiet, and I tried to look for a way to escape. I received help from some ladies and they advised me to go on the street. Then I became a prostitute.*



## Engendering the State in Refugee Women's Claim for Asylum

*All refugees inhabit a space of extreme marginalisation and vulnerability by having moved outside the established pattern of states and citizenship, and female refugees share certain aspects of being out of bounds with male refugees: loss of state legitimisation by crossing physical boundaries, and losing a sense of belonging. In this situation there is a need for them to reconstruct their own boundaries and identities in a foreign place, while other people are imposing, their boundaries (and identities) on them ... However, there are also experiences which are specific to the gender of the refugee. (Laurie et al. 1997: 130, emphasis in original)*

Feminist scholars have increasingly criticised the failure of international human rights law to respond appropriately to women's experiences of violence. These concerns are mirrored in a growing body of theoretical and empirical research that argues that women who flee violence and seek asylum in other countries are unable to benefit equitably from protection under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. This research suggests that although international instruments make no distinction between men and women, their interpretations by receiving states both reflect and reinforce gender biases within states themselves. As a result, many women are denied protection for reasons that have less to do with the content of refugee law than with gender.

*Whenever he went on his long journey, I went to the street. But when he came back home his friends were like watchdogs. At one time he was told I was not at home, and he almost killed me. When I saved enough money, I escaped to Cape Town, to one of my friends directed to me by the ladies on the street, only to realise that she was a prostitute as well. I stayed with her but life was not easy. I was still forced to go back to the street to look for money, to feed my kids. Later I became very sick and I could not work anymore. I had to go to the hospital and they informed me that I was HIV positive. I felt so discouraged that I wanted to end my life and that of my children, but my friend strongly advised me against it. I had to carry on in the same manner by putting my body and soul together. In the state I was in, I tried to work two to three times a week.*

*I am dying but I would like to do so honourably. If only I could find some kind of employment, then I would stay off the street and take care of my kids. They need food, clothing and a home like all other kids. I ask myself over and over again what will happen to them when I am no longer there. I cannot afford to go back home. I have not been in touch with my family for a very long time.*

*In conclusion, I can say that with the help of all the other sisters present here today, I have found the courage to speak. Because of this, I think I can find the courage to go on.*



Women suffer the same deprivation and harm that is common to all refugees. Many are targeted because they are political activists, community organisers, members of women's movements or persist in demanding that their rights or those of their relatives or community members are respected. They are often punished not only because they oppose the political structures of the state, but because they challenge dominant gender ideologies by being politically active. (Spijkerboer 1994; Pettman 1996). Women's political protest, activism and resistance may also manifest itself in different ways. Women may hide people, pass messages or provide community services, food, clothing and medical care; many are persecuted because they resist state-sanctioned rules and regulations regarding their behaviours; those who challenge or are unable to conform to either the moral or ethical standards imposed on them may suffer cruel or inhuman treatment; women are abused by members of their family and/or community. In addition, the authorities may exploit family relationships to intensify harm and undermine political opposition by men. The failure to recognise the gender processes through which political identity is constructed undermines women's access to protection.

As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) suggest, because women's relationship to the state is racialised and ethnicised as it is gendered, it is critically important to connect race, gender and processes and identities and not to assume that they exist separately from one another. Women's political identities and their experiences of persecution are shaped by their racial, ethnic, cultural and sexual identities as well as by class, age and marital status. Their experiences of the process of asylum determination as well as the final outcome of their claim similarly reflect the intersection of these multiple identities with the political agendas of receiving states. One of the most obvious ways in which this happens is through the issue of credibility, which remains one of the most pervasive problems for almost all asylum applications made in the UK (Refugee Council 1996). For example, Razack suggests that where a survivor of sexual violence is a black woman *racism and sexism intersect in particularly nasty ways to produce profound marginalisation* (Razack (4: 897). The likelihood that she will be disbelieved is intensified because of the existence of pervasive racist myths about black sexuality.

Even outside these racialised aspects of asylum determination there remain striking similarities in the ways in which the experiences of women asylum-seekers, regardless of their country of origin, are assessed. The evidence which has been collected during the course of my research suggests that in countries such as the UK, which are not only trying to restrict the arrival of potential asylum-seekers (for example, through the imposition of visa regimes and the deployment of officers overseas to prevent inadequately documented passengers from boarding aeroplanes in the first place) but also to limit the extent of their obligations under national asylum law, asylum-seekers whose experiences of persecution do not fit rigidly defined categories will be the first to be refused protection. While a lack of gender-differentiated statistics in the UK context makes quantitative assessment difficult, evidence collected during the course of my research suggests not only that women are less able to gain entry into the decision-making process in the first place (because of the description that they are dependent upon spouses or other male relatives) but also that they are less likely to be granted refugee status than men (at the initial decision-making stage) and more likely to be allowed in on compassionate or humanitarian grounds. As a result, women have little or no control over the costs or conditions of protection which, rather than giving them rights, often entails them behaving as victims, weak, passive and grateful (Pettman 1996).

**Source** Extracts from "Engendering the State in Refugee Women's Claim for Asylum"; Heaven Crawley; *States of Conflict*.



## The longest genocide



Testimony on the Economic Blockade as a Weapon of War  
Mayda Alvarez Sudrez, Cuba

*Possessing nothing more  
between heaven and earth than  
my memory, than this time:*

*I hereby make my will.  
It is this:  
I leave you all time,  
all time.*

Eliseo Diego, Cuba

*I attend today this World Court of Women against War, for Peace to condemn, as a Cuban, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on my country by the Government of the United States since the triumph of our revolution in 1962.*

*This has been the longest and the most unjust blockade any nation has been submitted to in history and the worst form of violence exercised on the women and all Cuban people. What is the reason? For the single reason that my country has never wanted to be one more star on the flag of the United States and it has chosen its own destiny freely. The apparent purpose of the blockade is to curb the human right of exercising the free determination of Cuban people that is evidently antagonistic.*

*The blockade on Cuba entails a **genocidal behaviour** on the part of the government of the United States, carried out to intentionally subject our people to living conditions that can bring total or partial physical damage. Genocide is a crime of international law against the spirit and the ends of a civilised world. My country is in its legitimate right to demand that such measures are condemned and sanctioned.*

*This blockade has been reinforced with other laws like the **Torricelli** and the **Helms-Burtons Law**, which impede third world countries to trade with Cuba. In the decade of the 90s, when we lost markets, prices and fundamental supplies due to the collapse of the socialist camp of Eastern Europe, the effects of the blockade accumulated for more than 30 years and aggravated by these laws were felt much more.*

*One of the fundamental effects that the blockade has produced on women, children and girls of my country has been the drastic shortage of food.*

*Since the early 90s, the percentage of infants with low birth weight rose from 7.6 to 9%. In 1996 the figure decreased to 7.3% thanks to the priority given by our government to this problem.*

*In 1995 it was calculated that in general, the food basket had a caloric deficit of around 200 units and it was below the parameters of nutrients, of fats, Vitamin A and those of the complex B, iron and others.*

*Anaemia was detected in 36.27% of children and girls from 6 to 12 months of age. The nutritional situation of school going children is more vulnerable for it is at these ages that the daily allotment of milk and other necessary foods ceases.*



*Difficulties have also been present with the weight of the pregnant women, those who begin the pregnancy with faulty weight, as well as those who don't gain necessary weight during the period of gestation. Also, the presence of anaemia directly causes the low birth weight of infant children.*

*Another area in which people have felt the effects of the blockade is health. Among the most important effects we find: difficulties in the supply of medications, reagents, instrumental expendable material, medical teams and paramedics, technology and investments that are given to the child population, decrease in beds for maternity service in 1994 and 1996, decrease in infant beds in 1993 and 1994, the deterioration of dental services, prevention, cure and rehabilitation, and especially those of orthodontics.*

*In the first years of the decade, primarily, there was a significant lack of physiotherapy equipment for the treatment of handicapped children, a lack of special surgical sutures for neonatal surgery, and a lack of registration papers for tests that have affected the cardiology services, the programme of early detection of congenital malformations in fetuses, perinatology and paediatrics services.*

*In general, we can say that Cuba presently pays an additional four to five million dollars annually for transportation. It would not be necessary to incur this expense if the blockade did not exist. This expense could be dedicated to acquire medications or the necessary goods.*

*The little availability of cotton, sanitary pads, antibiotics for vaginal infections, and other inputs for the specific problems of the woman's health, hinder the hygiene and increase the risks of getting infected with contagious illnesses. The shortage of contraceptives limits the possibility of preventing unwanted pregnancies.*

*The lack of basic food necessities within the family is the source of permanent tension that affects mainly women. They continue being the ones mainly in charge of guaranteeing food for the sustenance of the family. Also, there have been shortages of fuel for cooking and resources that guarantee the appropriate sanitary conditions.*

*Other impacts of the blockade that have made the daily life of the families and particularly of women difficult are - the limitations in the transportation services and electricity, the lack of fuel, the impossibility to continue construction programmes of houses and child institutions (day care centres) for the care of the boys and girls in preschool ages. This affects mainly the working mothers above all. The non-availability of domestic appliances increases the load of the work in the homes, the reduced production and import of toys for the children, the limitations of publications to inform and educate our women. The *Revista Mujeres* and *Muchachas*, the Cuban women's publications, are not being published due to lack of paper.*

*I request to be allowed to give to this Tribunal a video with a group of Cuban women testifying to the effects of the blockade that I have spoken about. These testimonies were pronounced in Public Audiences that took place in three counties of the country as part of the preparation for the *International Court of Cuban Women against the Blockade* that we have been organising for one year and to which we have invited Nelson Mandela. Cuban women would be very proud to have in our Court the presence of this great leader and friend.*

*Finally, I speak my testimony not only to share with you the indignation that the blockade has done to our women, children, the elderly, and men, but also to share with you the spirit of resistance of my people, their dignity and their efforts to optimise the resources, to find alternatives, to diminish to the maximum the effects of the blockade, to preserve the achievements reached and to continue struggling for our development.*



*We refuse your abyss, and your rope  
cannot see your net  
your cloudy reality,  
we tread by our own headless path*

Barbara Burford

The International Court of Women  
Against the Economic Blockade  
Havana, Cuba  
21-23 March, 2002

*El Taller International, the Federation of Cuban Women and the Cuban Institute of Philosophy organised the International Court of Women against the Economic Blockade from March 21-23, 2002 in Havana, Cuba. We include in this section the Jury statement and some of the testimonies presented during the court that is evidence of the "extraordinary courage of an extraordinary people fighting an extraordinary war". It also is an indictment of a global superpower that has achieved this status only by attempting to disempower and destroy any system and people that defy its system of hegemony and control.*

## \*Statement of the Jury to the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights

### *Introduction*

The International Court of Women Against the Economic Blockade was held in Havana, Cuba. It was convened by El Taller International, the Federation of Cuban Women and the Cuban Institute of Philosophy.

The international members of the Jury were Fatima Meer (South Africa) Nora Cortiñas (Argentina), Denis Halliday (Ireland), Heinz Dieterich (Mexico), Eunice Santana (Puerto Rico), Youba Sokona (Senegal), and Gloria La Riva (United States).

The Court of Women heard 27 testimonies from Cuban women, drawn from many regions of the country and reacting to many different areas of impact on which the U.S. blockade imposes on the people. In addition, five Cuban experts set the general context under the following headings: *the genocidal nature of the blockade; the use of biological and bacteriological warfare against Cuba; the U.S. legislation tightening the blockade; the consequences of the Cuban Adjustment Act; and the resistance of Cuban women.*

The testimonies were presented before 2,000 participants, predominantly Cuban women. In addition there was extensive radio and television coverage to millions of people.

*After listening to many hours of testimony, the Jury came to the conclusion that U.S. policy against Cuba has been and continues to be an unconscionable violation of international law and is genocidal in nature.*

### **Part I**

#### *State terrorism and the U.S. blockade against Cuba*

The United States position is that of a *state terrorist*. This form of state terrorism has continued in regard to Cuba for over 40 years. The testimonies of expert witnesses and the personal testimonies of Cuban women confirmed the various forms that U.S. state terrorism takes on the Cuban nation and its peoples. Since 1959, the U.S. has engaged in a comprehensive policy of destruction that includes *economic embargo, cultural, political and social isolation, outright military and paramilitary invasion, sabotage, countless assassination attempts on Cuba's leaders, combined with continuous breach of Cuban sovereignty*. The 1976 bombing of the Cuban Airlines civilian plane by U.S.-trained terrorists – the first bombing of a commercial airliner in history — and the subsequent harbouring of these terrorists has become part of the ongoing aggression against innocent Cuban civilians.

\* an abridged version



## Part II

### *Impact on the daily life of Cuban women and their families*

Great disaster is realised through deliberate and intentional attacks on the life support systems of the people through bacteriological and biological aggression that contaminates crops, introduction of new diseases never seen in Cuba before, severely impairing the health of the people. Testifiers and expert agronomists reported seeing U.S. aircraft spraying unknown substances, after which crops withered and died.

This aggression has often left the people without adequate electricity, sanitation, social services and made daily life under the blockade that much more difficult in respect of preparation and storage of foodstuffs. The psychological damage is no less than the physical harm caused by deprivation.

Of particular cruelty is the U.S. legislation designed to further strangle the fundamental rights of the Cuban people through the denial of food and medicines. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union's reduced support, Cuba's main trading partner, the U.S. 1992 "Cuban Democracy Act" prohibited U.S. third-country subsidiaries from selling these products to Cuba. In one year, Cuba's trade with these entities dropped from \$900 million to \$1.6 million, thus collapsing Cuba's purchasing options. The 1996 Helms-Burton Act illegally attempts to internationalise the blockade by intimidating other countries that trade with Cuba. As a result, other countries have become complicit in the crime that the blockade represents.

## Part III

### *The Cuban Adjustment Act*

With regard to this 1966 Act, the Jury was deeply concerned with the impunity represented in U.S. encouragement of Cuban individuals to risk their lives by illegal emigration. It is estimated that 70% of Cuban rafters — enticed by no less than 2,250 broadcast hours weekly from Miami — lose their lives in the Florida straits.

Cuba's right to defend its sovereignty has been challenged by the U.S. political prosecution and sentencing to life five Cuban men in U.S. courts in 2001. These Cubans tried to prevent further loss of Cuban lives by monitoring the activities of U.S.-funded terrorist groups based in Miami. The Jury calls for their immediate release.

With regard to the open-ended U.S. occupation of Guantanamo bay, the Jury was impressed by the sophisticated restraint of Cuba in its determination to avoid responses to U.S. provocation, thereby denying an opportunity to the U.S. for large-scale and possibly country-wide military aggression.

## Part IV

### *The Cuban people's resistance*

Despite its genocidal intent, the blockade has not diminished the extraordinary dignity of the Cuban people. While their sovereignty is under constant attack, their sense of identity, and their determination to sustain their right to be different is remarkable. The people of Cuba have not just survived the blockade, they have surmounted it and by the application of alternative means have largely met such essentials of life as social services, medical care, culture, community well - being and education. Those who testified showed no indication of considering themselves to be victims, but rather as fighters against the unending and unjustified warfare that the blockade represents.

### *Summary and Recommendations of the Jury*

1. The U.S. blockade confirms the gross unacceptability of sanctions internationally as a tool to impose suffering and even death on innocent civilians in order to destabilise a government.
2. The impact on the social, cultural and economic well-being of the Cuban people through the intentional maintenance of a 40-year blockade satisfies the definition of genocide as per the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
3. In the light of the blockade and related actions, the United States' current *War on Terrorism* is an extraordinary hypocrisy, given U.S. economic, military and paramilitary aggression against Cuba.
4. Not only have the fundamental rights of the Cuban people, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, been undermined but the right to national self-determination and the unwritten rights of whole communities of people are equally being threatened.
5. The U.S. blockade on Cuba constitutes the violation of both international and domestic U.S. law, including the targeting of non-combatants, the rights of women and children, and indeed the basic right of life itself, as established in the United Nations charter.
6. The annual condemnation of the U.S. blockade by the General Assembly of the United Nations and its rejection by Washington underlines the need to re-establish a United Nations in which the membership of the General Assembly has pre-eminence.
7. The Jury believes the need for compensation to Cuba by the United States, in addition to the return of vast frozen assets, must be addressed urgently.
8. The terrible consequences of the blockade on the people of Cuba, taken together with the annual condemnation of the U.S. by the United Nations General Assembly, and Washington rejection thereof, warrants that the violence of the blockade be taken to the International Court of Justice by concerned UN member states.

After witnessing the dignity and determination of Cuban women to withstand and overcome the U.S. blockade, the Jury of the International Court of Women found evidence to show that a way to create and sustain alternative means to a better world is indeed possible.

Havana, 25 March 2002



The advocates of freedom  
of expression keep information  
away from their own citizens

Testimony on media disinformation on Cuba  
*Aixa Hevia Gonzalez*

*I, Aixa Hevia Gonzalez, journalist with 15 years of experience in the profession, of which 10 are dedicated to the Cuban radio, denounce the campaigns of distortion and libeling launched against our country, through the press in the United States, mainly from the spokesmen of the Cuban-American Mafia in Miami, who encourage subversion, foster terrorist actions and send to death thousands of Cuban by promoting the Criminal Law of Cuban Adjustment.*

*Though the illegal radio and TV broadcasts constitutes an international crime, sanctioned by multiple laws, Cuba has had to suffer for more than 40 years the radial and TV aggression from the United States territory to try to destabilise and destroy the Revolution. For these perfidious purposes, the US government has allocated almost 400 million dollars, which have gone to the pockets of ultra right members and terrorists of Miami. More than 2000 hours of subversive broadcasts encourage carrying out sabotages, where innocent human beings die, damage the economy, murder leaders and stimulate illegal immigration, where thousands of Cubans and, unfortunately, many children uprooted from their school, have died.*

*In one of the last episodes related with the Cuban Adjustment Law, where 30 persons died, among them 13 children, the press at the service of the Miami mafia offered itself to broadcast false expectations of survival to the Cuban relatives anguished by the disappearance of their loved ones.*

*During the kidnapping of the child Élian Gonzalez, the mass media at the service of the ultra right broadcasted an appeal requested to collect large sums of money in order to finance his relatives' lawyers with the purpose of separating an infant from his father and making him pay for the hatred of an extreme minority. The sympathy of the new American administration towards the most radical sectors of Miami brought about the appointment of Salvador Lew, as new Director of the Broadcast Office of Radio and TV Marti against Cuba, a character with wide experience in radial counterrevolutionary journalism and to whom Bush assigned the task of overcoming the interferences made in Cuba to Radio and TV Marti. After that appointment and with the consent of the American President, the radial aggression has turned more virulent; reporters, commentators and producers represent the most reactionary trends of the counterrevolution, allowing, at the same time, renowned leaders of the mafia such as Carlos Alberto Montaner, Huber Matos and Armando Perez Roura to make use of the microphone.*

*Let's observe these statistics, where an increase of the radial aggression against the Cuban people is shown.*

*Daily: from 309 to 315 hours of broadcasting through medium, short and FM waves.*

*Weekly: 2183 hours. If we add the invisible TV Marti, the figure is 2215 hours.*

*Total number of stations that broadcast reports against Cuba: 13, one of them from the United States government and 11 from terrorist organisations.*

*Stations particularly addressed against Cuba: 7*

*Stations which are listened to in Cuba: 6*

*Total number of frequencies used: 24*

*The Miami press has also taken part in the recent libelous campaigns against Cuba, in which it presents us as a threat to the United States. We have been accused of preparing an alleged information aggression and even introducing weapons from China in secrecy, when they were, in reality, ships loaded with food to the Cubans. The purpose is evident: to continue cheating world public opinion.*

*Another example of the radial aggression against our country and their serious consequences, took place in the month of February this year, when Radio Marti, the official station of the American Government, published a false and perfidious news on the statements of the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorge Castañeda, at the opening of the Mexican Cultural Institute in Miami and that provoked the incident at the Embassy of Mexico in Havana. The phrase of the Mexican Minister of Foreign Affairs where he stated, **the doors of the Embassy of his country in Havana were open to all Cuban citizens** was repeated to encourage the listeners to commit illegal acts. Reporters from Radio Marti manipulated, misrepresented and distorted the statements and even broadcast the words of Jorge Mas Santos, leader of the terrorist organisation, Cuban-American Foundation.*



We wonder how it is possible that those who are the main advocates of "freedom of expression", "free exchange of information", and are presented as the main fighters against terrorism in the planet, prevent people from the knowledge of the Cuban reality, using their media to harass, to encourage terrorist actions and to keep information away from their own citizens

We also denounce the dirty role of Miami mass media, in the case of the political trial carried out against our five patriots prisoners of the USA who were sentenced guilty in a fixed trial. The written, electronic, radial and TV media have accused constantly the patriots of being spies and have tried to submit false evidences, to condition the American opinion that is made blind to the vast culture, firm principles and convictions, of the five youngsters. Of the 150 headlines published on

this case by The New Herald, till June 2001, 104 used the word *spy* or *espionage* with preset reasons, presenting them as a threat for the United States security; but the terrorism launched against Cuba for more than 40 years with the consent of all the American governments was never recognised.

I take advantage of this forum to denounce that in the light of the increase of the imperialist blockade, our people have had to suffer from a lack of access to their own media, due to the scarcity of paper and other resources, reduction of radio and TV broadcasts. We have also been deprived of the publications oriented to Women, of which only one tabloid has been rescued.

On behalf of more than 3000 members of the Union of Journalists of Cuba with about 40% women, we demand the lift of the criminal blockade, to stop the illegal radio and TV broadcasts against the island and the criminal Cuban Adjustment Law that has cast thousands of families into mourning, above all mothers, wives and children. We wonder how it is possible that those who are the main advocates of *freedom of expression, free exchange of information*, and are presented as the main fighters against terrorism in the planet, prevent people from the knowledge of the Cuban reality, using their media to harass, to encourage terrorist actions and to keep information away from their own citizens.

The weapon used to hide the truth has always been used by the successive American Administrations. Then, let's contribute in this forum to demand justice for all- the Cuban men and women attacked during more than 40 years, and the world, which is prevented from knowing why we are different.

## I feel an extraordinary strength because of our everyday heroism

*Testimony of resistance from the  
Movement of Creative Women  
Bárbara Eugenia Guerra Gil*

*My name is Barbara Eugenia Guerra Gil. I am retired. I have felt as a woman, mother and teacher the rigor the criminal blockade from the United States has imposed on my country for over forty years.*

*The special period, which has been the hardest stage our people has suffered, has brought out the intelligence of Cubans who have stood firm and have developed, despite all the difficulties we have had to face.*

*The woman especially has had to make extraordinary sacrifices in this hard struggle and has proved that the tenderness of her heart joins the sharpness of her mind in order to fight this criminal blockade.*

*I am a founder of the Movement of Creative Women from the National Association of Innovators and Rationalisers (ANIR) that came up to counteract the blockade, which along with the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), has contributed a myriad solutions to resolve the many difficulties we have faced in the school, the family, and the community in general.*

*As a founder of the Movement of Creative Women I have had the chance to see how much has been done to solve different problems such as lack of shoes, school uniforms, food and teaching aids for our children, spare parts, equipment, cosmetics and other daily necessities for our livelihood. In mountain communities where the attendance of children in classes has been affected due to problems like the lack of shoes, the women have innovated and created amazingly beautiful and strong shoes using different materials such as fibres, clothing, tyres, crochet cloths, etc.*

*In the industry we have comrades who have developed innovative equipments that are simple, useful and low in production cost. For instance one of them from Granma Province developed a watering equipment and water pump joints that proved to be very effective and cost saving.*

*While on the one hand the Blockade has been extremely destructive, on the other it has brought out the best in us in terms of creative resistance and innovation in all sectors of our life.*

*Another example of the tireless struggle to decrease the economic and social effects produced by the blockade is the one related to the food industry in which our creative women have once again displayed their intelligence to evolve a product like ice cream that has not only been patented now as a food item but has proved profitable by bringing in \$ 600,000 to the economy of the country in the last few years. I have helped, within the movement of Creative Women to promote and publicise among other innovations, fruit candies made by a very simple technique with a high nutritional value and delicious to taste.*



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Another example of how our Creative Women withstood the blockade is in the field of the visual arts. I have certified innovations such as the use of those paints, which substitute commercial watercolors with plants colours that are applied by directly rubbing the petals of the flowers or through brushes by dipping plants in alcohol. For this the children do not have to pick fresh flowers since only the ones that fall to the floor are used.

Our work has also won for us prizes in various Science and Technology Forums, in the country

If these examples are not enough, to show why the criminal blockade to which we have been submitted for over forty years has not fulfilled its purposes we have the most encouraging examples to confirm the fact that our resistance will not be broken. Our movement of Creative Women grows because the youngest generation will continue entering its ranks.

I will just mention the work of three pioneering young girls who have also exhibited their creativity. One who created a didactic game (a puzzle word to know an animal from the Cuban fauna) meant for children of five years of age; one who created artistic figures as teaching aids, and one who made marmalade baby food from root vegetables and fruits for the feeding of the children in the Day care Centers.

It is with this sap that, our movement of Creative Women regenerates itself constantly.

That is why although I have felt deeply and personally the impact of the blockade from the United States, today I feel an extraordinary strength, because I am convinced that the creativity, the everyday heroism and the immense love that we, the Cuban Creative Women have, will ensure the advance of our country. This will also not weaken my commitment to socialism, which opened the doors of our dignity as human beings.



## I don't understand the cruelty of those people who introduced the plague

*Testimony of a Tobacco worker  
Caridad Acosta Pimentel*

*My name is Caridad Acosta. I am from San Juan y Martínez. I am a tobacco worker. I planted one hectare of 40 thousand tobacco plantlets and I was seriously affected by the blue mold. It was very hard for us because one plants the tobacco to solve the situation of the tobacco leaf for the country. So when they came one morning and told me "Lets go; there are big problems", I got very nervous but anyway I got there with my fighting spirit to look for the technician specialising in Plant Health. He came and told me: "This is really bad" and I replied: "No, it's not bad, let's fight against this". So he brought the products and we started fumigating stopping the damage and then we started to choose the undamaged leaves and managed to save fifty percent of the leaves for the crop.*

*While this was very hard for the whole province and the tobacco workers, we have fought this and we will never get tired of resisting this.*

*Sometimes we meet in the neighbourhood and we talk about this. I don't understand the cruelty of the persons who introduced this plague because here in Cuba we don't damage anyone. On the contrary, we try to help all the countries in the world, so why this ill will against us. It's like what happened in Matanzas and in many other places. There was a plague that exterminated the potato, the beans and everything.*

*I believe the world should know what they are doing to us. What we do is to cooperate with everyone and give everyone what we have and what we don't have, because sometimes we give everything we have to other peoples in the world as a proof of our solidarity. That's why this testimony must be taken everywhere for everyone to know.*

*As a Cuban woman, I condemn this kind of aggression that comes from the United States. This country feels a lot of envy for us because of our achievements. They cannot defeat the Cuban people. What we want is to live and work in peace.*

*I wanted to be the best harvester and I was very disappointed when it came out that because of the plague I couldn't harvest 50 % of the crop. It's not the story of one single tobacco worker who feels mad at this; it's about all the people in my country because this aggression has affected everyone. If we don't have tobacco leaves, we lose one of the most important sources of income for the country that enables us to buy food for our children and medicines for the hospitals. So everybody knows that if there is no tobacco, there is no hard currency.*

*I feel very moved when I speak about this because we are the best producers of tobacco in the world and we don't have any reasons to bear these aggressions. For many years we have been dealing with the blockade but we have managed to survive. Our technicians and scientists have had to invent the drugs and here nobody dies due to the lack of a drug and this is also thanks to tobacco.*

*That is why I want to raise my voice as a tobacco worker in this Court for the world to know about this crime.*



## I do not ask for revenge in this court

*A testimony from a victim of the  
Cuban Adjustment Act.  
Georgina Reyes Sánchez*

*My name is Georgina Reyes Sanchez. I live in the Minas municipality, Camaguey province and I come to represent the Cuban women.*

*I come to this court to denounce before the world the government of the United States which is the responsible for the terrorist acts that have taken place inside and outside of our country throughout these years of revolution, with the aim to destroy our spirit.*

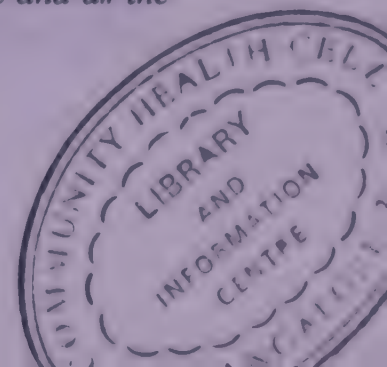
*On August 8, 1994, at 5 p.m. my son, Captain Roberto Aguilar Reyes, was killed when his ship was kidnapped in Mariel, Havana. An auxiliary ship from the Revolutionary Navy, led by Leonel Macias Gonzalez using the Cuban Adjustment Act killed my son, treacherously, with no scruples. He used criminal means to kidnap the ship and then run away to the United States where he was welcomed as a hero and has subsequently always enjoyed total impunity after this cowardly murder.*

*I condemn the government of the United States as the one most responsible for these deeds, and not its people, who I admire and respect, and I ask them to join us in this struggle to end up with brutal blockade and all the assassin laws that sharpen it.*

*I do not ask for revenge in this court. I just want justice, not only in my name, but in the name of the Cuban people, specially the women who have suffered during all these years from these acts of vandalism organised and financed from the United States.*

*I demand justice for our five heroes who are prisoners of the Empire who have been unjustly condemned for trying to prevent incidents like those that cost my son his life.*

*As a Cuban mother, a victim of the state terrorism, I condemn the government of the United States as the one most responsible for these deeds, and not its people, who I admire and respect, and I ask them to join us in this struggle to end up with brutal blockade and all the assassin laws that sharpen it.*



## I give this testimony in honour of my son

*Testimony of a mother who lost her child to cancer.*

**María Luz Rodríguez Cosme**

*My name is Maria Luz Rodriguez Cosme, I am a graduate in Literature and Spanish and since 1982 I work as a Professor in the Faculty of Children's Education of the Higher Pedagogic Institute "Frank Pais" in Santiago de Cuba.*

*I have two sons who are 15 and 13 years old. The eldest one, named Alejandro felt bad abdominal pains when he was 11 years old and a week later we took him to the doctors. It happened on May 1996. Some days later he was operated after a thorough checkup, which detected a tumour over the suprarenal.*

*When assessing what kind of tumour had been extracted by the urologists, the pathologist of "La Colonia" brought together some other doctors and they diagnosed two kinds of tumours. They then decided to send the biopsy to the Hospital "Hermanos Ameijeiras" in Havana where there was an electronic microscope that could tell the name and etymology of the tumour.*

*The boy was admitted in the National Oncology Institute. Some days after the operation they diagnosed a neuroestodermic tumour and an alveolus sarcoma, both rare and not seen in people of his age. The technical council led by the doctor Lonchon, head of the National Paediatric Oncology Services, corroborated this. They made a thorough test in Havana in order to assess the general situation. The last test made was the axial tomography which was delayed due to the fact that there are only four units of this equipment in the capital and during June- July 1996 three of them were out of order. I managed to get the test in the Military- Naval Hospital by myself because without this test the treatment of cytostatics couldn't be applied as the stage of the disease was unknown.*



*Although our country gives priority to life saving and life extending drugs, in reality the parents and relatives of a patient have to endure much suffering because of the blockade that does not allow us to improve the quality of life of our sick sons.*

*We went to Santiago de Cuba because there is a ward in the Northern Children's Hospital that despite the fact that it could not meet all the required conditions, still carried out the treatments. In mid July, he began with the serum cycle and in April 1997 he was about to complete six cycles but there was a crisis with the purchase of serum as a result of the Helms- Burton law. After a long procedure facilitated by a friend of Cuba, half of the serum needed by the country was acquired.*

*Noris Corrales, the paediatrician of the ward decided to link the last treatment for Alejandro with that of another boy because it was convenient to apply the established protocol*

*and thanks to that, he could complete the treatment. During all these years, the cancer patients haven't had regular access to these treatments as they are very expensive and because it's difficult to get them because of the blockade. The availability of analgesics needed by patients, such as Amicodex, anti-scab talcum powders and ointments, vitamin E and other vitamins have also been affected. Some vitamins like C and A are produced in Cuba but in small quantities because of lack of raw material.*

*Sometimes there wasn't even a simple tablet of "Duralgina", an aspirin-free analgesic in the ward and in the whole hospital needed by those patients who should not take aspirin. Due to this the patients had to get other analgesics by themselves. There was also the non availability of the drug that prevents hair loss as also a drug called Zophran that soothes the suffering during the process of administering the serum since these are all available only in the United States.*

*Although our country gives priority to life saving and life extending drugs, in reality the parents and relatives of a patient have to endure much suffering because of the blockade that does not allow us to improve the quality of life of our sick sons. However in most cases the dedication and affection of the medic and paramedic personnel made it easier because in spite of the lack of basics such as regular shot-needles, dextrose serum, and other devices, they take loving care of the patients.*

*After feeling well until 1998, my son had a relapse in May that year because of the metastasis that reappeared, despite the application of three harder cycles. They could not do anything further to stop the illness.*

*It is important to say that despite all these problems, my son went to classes in the Secondary School and he even got his Ninth Grade Title.*

*As a mother I didn't stop. I continued to try and save his life through different treatments available within our country like the green medicine, the ESCOZOR, the shark cartilage and others. Through all this we began to prepare him to understand his illness and know its limitations since he continued to live only with one kidney. Because of this he managed to raise his self esteem and gain in self-confidence.*

*I had to continue with my job since my son required a balanced diet and though the Government granted him the basic food, it was expensive to buy the supplementary food due to the limitations of the country. During this painful process, I continued also with my responsibilities as a member of social and political organisations and I have gone on bettering myself. My professional evaluations have been good and I must say that my temper got stronger with so much pain and suffering.*

*My son has died, but in his honour and in the honour of my other son, I give here this testimony.*

*Everything I have faced and suffered is only one among the others experienced by other women. We however continue to grow strong because we thrive in the face of adversity. As Cuban women we resemble our flag, alive, full of colours and always fluttering. That is the source of our patriotism and love of life.*





## The mercenaries wanted to take me hostage

*Testimony of a victim of mercenary invasion.*

*Patria Silva Trujillo*

*My name is Patria Silva Trujillo. I was a teacher in Cienaga de Zapata, Playa Giron when I became a victim of the mercenary invasion organised by and paid for by the United States in April 1961. I was a member of the Alphabetisation brigades and the invasion caught me there.*

*There were workers building cabins and a tourist center in Giron. There were three peasants settlements and one teacher for each of them. There was no regular Army there, not even militiamen organised in a battalion, but just one militia house with a nominal number of weapons.*

*On 17 April at 12.25 a.m. I was coming back to my cabin when I heard gunshots and later I knew they were coming from a 50-mm caliber machine gun. I ran to the school to meet Ana Maria Hernandez, the teacher of the younger children and she asked me "Did you see the lights." she was referring to the flare thrown by the mercenaries. I left immediately to wake up the other teacher, Mario Fernandez and the three of us went to the militia house to get informed about the events and to meet another teacher who was authorised to be on duty that day. When we got there we saw worried workers and peasants so we asked for weapons and the militia chief replied there were none because they had already delivered the few weapons they had. At that moment the head of the Beach Guard, Mariano Mustelier came and told us that an invasion was going on and a landing was taking place. When I asked him about the teacher, he informed us that he was wounded by a gunshot that came from the boats that were approaching the coast.*

*I was 19 years old and I had a great responsibility for the life of other teachers who were only 15 years old. That's why all I wanted was to rescue the wounded teacher, to warn the peasants to evacuate the beach and to send a warning to the Capital by any means. With that aim we went to the school under heavy gunfire and in complete darkness. When we got there the mercenaries came shouting "Come out, we are the Liberation Army and we are here to set you free from the communist yoke." I was the first to come out and I replied "Who told you that this was a yoke and that we wanted to be free from communism." I was immediately taken away from the group and identified as fidelist. The group asked them to let me back in and advised me to keep silent. Then they let me join the group again and we spent the night there.*

*There was a pregnant woman with us named Caridad having a haemorrhage and I remember her 5-year-old daughter continuously crying. I could witness the tanks arrival from there and we came out to the entrance hall at dawn and saw Batle, the head of the frogmen and he said that he had seen me the day before in the swimming pool, so I replied "Then you knew that there was no Army here, just peasants and workers, despite which you came shooting with your machine-guns." I never heard his reply. We could see the mercenaries move from initial euphoria to panic when our aviation forces started the air raid.*

*"I was teaching to read and write because I was a revolutionary and we were a part of a revolution of the humble for the humble and to the humble"*

*On that morning they took us from the school to the Club. Andreus, the politician of the mercenaries interviewed Ana Maria and me. When he asked me what I was doing in the place I replied that "I was teaching to read and write because I was a revolutionary and we were a part of a revolution of the humble for the humble and to the humble". Ana Maria thought as I did. Then we found the wounded teacher. He had shrapnel all over his face. We could not move forward because the gunfire was very intense. Then we were led to one of the hotels guarded by a mercenary. I could reach my radio and the booklet of political training. Then I listened to the information that Valdes Vivo was giving about the invasion and about the fighting of our militia. They took my radio away to cut my access to the news.*

*On Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April in the morning Chino King came. We did not know him but he was openly provoking. He asked about the revolutionary teachers because he was informed that we had been shouting at the mercenaries. He came to advise us as they were allegedly winning.*

*I asked him what was he doing there if they were going to Havana. He said that they have launched a religious crusade against atheistic communists and he had killed a fisherman. I told him I was a Socialist Catholic and he replied saying that there are no Socialist Catholics. Then he told me that they had just shot a female battalion in Playa Larga and I started shouting he was a killer. He got angry and brought another mercenary with a rifle to take me to the firing line because in his opinion I had to be with them to die.*



*At the firing line we had to keep running all the time because of the raids and the mercenaries would not let us find shelter in the corners of the houses. We were already in bad condition without food and water. They put us in a room with other frightened mercenaries who were saying that the pilots would not carry more wounded because our planes would not let them do it. They attacked us verbally; they pushed me and threatened our lives. That was really a turbulent Tuesday. I even lost my consciousness a few times. Ana Maria was hit in the face resulting in a great bruise. The young teacher was constantly wetting himself over me and shaking and was I trying to protect him.*

*Next day the fight was sharper. We were taken to the horseshoe breakwater, which is an artificial barrier that crosses the beach. We spent the whole day there under water and exposed to fire. My clothes were torn and I was full of scratches and bruises. I am shortsighted and I had lost my glasses. We witnessed the mercenaries retreating totally demoralised, leaving their weapons behind them and fighting with each other to board the boats that were taking them to the warships. After 5 p.m. we could return to the beach and we were hiding in a house, when Mariano, the Head of the Beach Guards came to tell us that the mercenaries wanted to take me as a hostage so we hid in a closet behind a mattress until one old peasant came to tell us that we could leave because there were no more mercenaries left behind.*

*In the evening we were rescued by the National Revolutionary Police and came to know about Fidel's concerns for the teachers who were in Giron at the moment of the landing of the mercenaries.*

*After the invasion I came back to Giron to complete my job and I faced severe health problems because I kept living through the horror of war. I have lived with this all my life.*



## Children wrote with ink from tree leaves

*Testimony to the creative reinvention of  
a subsistence economy*  
**Teresa Segura Cisneros**

*My name is Teresa Segura Cisneros. I am an economist and I have two reasons to accept the great responsibility to give my testimony in this International Court. The first reason is the undeniable and objective fact that our country and in particular our people suffer everyday the effects of the blockade and its aggressive consequences. This deserves a denunciation. The second reason has to do with the fact that I am not a special case. I thus represent the common working woman, the head of a Cuban home. I am divorced. I have a daughter to take care of and I have parents getting old and demanding attention. I am a woman who has to design emerging strategies to solve the daily problems.*

*I grew up knowing that Cuba had to pay a high price for its dignity with my own experiences of my family against terrorist actions. I have known the death of our animals as a result of diseases introduced in the country from abroad. I have know of harvests lost to deliberately induced viruses and plagues. The crashing of the Barbados plane moved me and I cried with my classmates over the loss of a friend's father who was in that plane. I suffered from dengue when the epidemic was introduced in Cuba. I suffered also from the difficulties faced during my sister's heart operation. They had to bring the drugs she needed from very far away because it was impossible to bring them from the United States although her life depended on that. Although all these events seem to be very extraordinary, I would rather say that I learned that the blockade was a fact because in my house as in most Cuban homes, the blockade was obvious.*

*Before the nineties the hands of the United States were closed for Cuba, but even after that far from opening, it became tighter as a fist forcing our country into submission. These events had a direct effect on Cuban homes.*



I am a woman  
who has to design  
emerging  
strategies to solve  
the daily problems

At that time I was in Guantanamo giving birth to my own family while I was working in the mountains with my husband, far away from my home in Havana. That's why my experience of building my own house, my marriage, my period of maternity, taking care of my child and making a social job, took place in the middle of this special period. There was a daily fight against the lack of transport, of fuel to cook, of electricity, of essential products to make the ordinary daily things that are necessary in any home, such as washing, cleaning and decorating the house.

Apart from that I have to stress that I spent almost the third part of my time cooking for which we needed a lot of imagination. First you had to think of what to cook, then how to do it without fuel. Most of the times we had to do it with firewood together with other neighbours and outside the apartment.

I learnt then the value of nature. I took advantage of the nearby river that allowed us to wash because it doesn't depend on electricity. Sometimes I looked angrily at my washing machine. I turned it to use it as a table covering it with a tablecloth.

I knew about Maguey, a substitute of soap that which despite irritating our hands, allowed us to keep the children's diapers shining and left our clothes completely clean. I had to use the sweet potato plants and other plants as a substitute for other necessary food during the breastfeeding period. It was a way to have more milk to feed my daughter. I confess that while I knew all the advantages of breastfeeding, I also continued with it because it was more economical. I delayed the moment to give meat to my child because I did not have it.

I acknowledge the solidarity of my mother, her colleagues and my neighbours who shared their food with me to help during my pregnancy and breastfeeding period.

I was lucky to have a healthy child because it was really difficult to find medicines. Our family doctor took good care of every patient. It was only possible to take laboratory tests and x-rays in very serious cases. You went from one hospital to another and from one drugstore to another until you could find the medicine you needed or some substitute.

In spite of this adversity, my daughter went to kindergarten since she was six months old and I went back to work. This time I had to go further away from my house in the mountains, because I had to travel to the plains.

The lack of fuel was another problem. I had a car but did not have 15 litres of gas to get home. The public transport was almost nonexistent and the timings of the buses were such that they did not coincide with my working hours.

*Although it was probably the most difficult period of my life, it was unforgettable since it was then that I learnt that life is linked to the people surrounding you and I shared also the heroism of many people. They did not close even one school but we repaired old books and children had to write with ink from tree leaves and there were mothers who had to sew the shoes of their children for them to be able to go to school. They had to deliver breakfasts in some schools located in poorer communities using supplies that came from nearby peasants' farms because the parents there did not have enough to give to their children. There were place where it was impossible to fix the paths to the schools and the people put the stones by hand to keep the road in shape.*

*I have to point out that due to all these material limitations, deep tensions also arose inside the families and a great stress was present in every act of family life.*

*That's why it's beautiful to talk about this because the difficulties put us face to face with brotherhood, dignity and the spirit of winners. My job was very important because I had to contribute towards ensuring kindergarten for newborn children as well as guarantee that all children could complete the main cycles of education. The greater part of the schools in the area had less than ten students and none were closed. I had to work with many people to assist older persons and to keep the sports and cultural life of the community working as it was the only form of recreation.*

*The worst moments are behind but nevertheless the blockade keeps affecting us. Yes our daily life is still difficult; we are far from displaying all our potentialities. The blockade does not allow us to maximise our strength and resources.*

*Nobody has the right to delay our dreams and expectations, wasting most of our time in fighting for survival when we are capable of fighting for a fuller and a higher quality of life.*

*We condemn the blockade because there is a great responsibility on our shoulders concerning daily life and because as women we are a determining factor in moving forward to develop our country. That is why we demand that the voices of the world come together to prevent the government of the Unites States from thwarting our wish to go on being free and sovereign Cubans.*



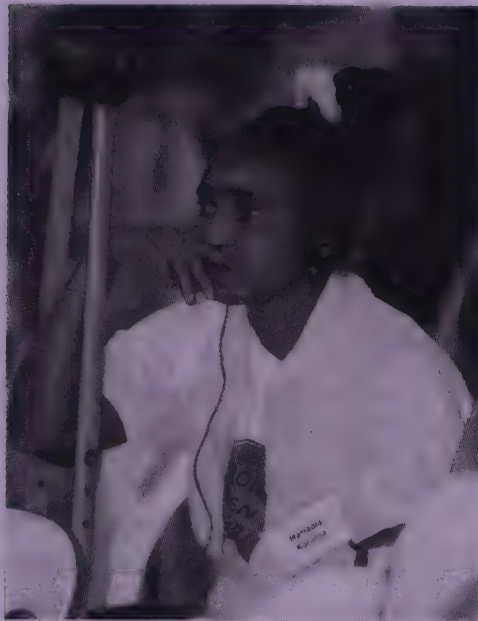


*If I stare at the country long enough  
I can prise it off the paper,  
lift it like a flap of skin*

*Each city has a window  
which I leave open  
a little wider each time*

Moniz a Alvi, Pakistan

## We cry for sustainable peace



**Testimony of a War Victim**  
**Mariama Koroma, Sierra Leone**

*My name is Mariama Koroma from Sierra Leone. I am thirty-five years old. I am currently living in the Aberdeen Road Amputee Camp, Murray Town, Freetown.*

*Before the civil war, I was living with my husband, a treasury clerk of Kalangba and my two daughters, Amida and Fatmata, aged seven and two years old respectively, in one of the chiefdoms in the Bombali District, Northern Province. I was a petty trader, buying and selling assorted food items in the surrounding villages in Kalangba. Early one morning in early 1997, rebels of the Revolutionary United Front attacked our town, Kalangba, while I was away in another village to sell goods. I lost my entire family during that attack. My children were killed and I have never heard about or seen my husband since that fateful day. Like our other sons, brothers and husbands, maybe the rebels abducted my husband.*

*I thought that life would be better for me if I relocated elsewhere. I relocated to Freetown in early 1998 to stay with my elder sister. This was just before the military intervention that reinstated the democratically elected government. During the military intervention, I, along with many other people who were living in the east end of Freetown, moved to the west end that was relatively safer. We lived in a mosque for a while. I attracted the sympathy of the Imam of the mosque who temporarily welcomed me in his home. My sister, who was my source of strength, fled to Guinea where she is now living as a refugee. I could not go with her because I did not have money to pay my travel fare. Actually, I did not want to risk losing the little money I had, which I had secretly hidden, because it was my only source of capital for re-engaging in small business when the security situation improved.*

*After the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement in July 1999 by the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front, I resumed my normal trading of some gallons of palm oil. On one of my trips to buy some produce, our vehicle was ambushed by a group of armed men in military uniform, who were rebels of the Revolutionary United Front. All of the passengers were women. The rebels ordered all of us to undress. We did so reluctantly; I realised that we were going to be raped, so I tried to run away. While I was running, I was shot several times in both legs. I remember falling instantly on the ground. I do not remember what happened after that.*

*I found myself in a hospital after the dreadful incident. I had been unconscious. I was told that soldiers of The West African Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) had rescued me and brought me to the Connaught Hospital. With shock, I realised that I had lost my right leg. My left leg, in bandage was propped up on the bed. I had not received immediate medical attention after I sustained the gun shot wounds, so naturally the sore became septic. It could not be treated. The only solution, I was later told, was to have my right leg surgically amputated to save my life.*

*I was finally discharged from hospital after four months of pain and mourning. I could not return to the Imam who had accommodated me in his home, as I needed someone to take care of me all the time. Moreover, for us amputees the need for mutual support is crucial in our process of healing, not just the physical wounds but the trauma of the horror we have experienced. Additionally, the Amputee camps are equipped to give us the specialised medical attention and rehabilitation that we require.*

## The Violent Legacy of Colonialism

*The* rain forest bordering the Kasai River was rich in rubber, and William Sheppard and the other American Presbyterians there found themselves in the midst of a cataclysm. The Kasai was also the scene of some of the strongest resistance to Leopold's rule. Armed men of a chief allied with the regime rampaged through the region where Sheppard worked, plundering and burning more than a dozen villages. Floods of desperate refugees sought help at Sheppard's mission station.

In 1899 the reluctant Sheppard was ordered by his superiors to travel into the bush, at some personal risk, to investigate the source of the fighting. There he found bloodstained ground, destroyed villages, and many bodies; the air was thick with the stench of rotting flesh. On the day he reached the marauders' camp, his eye was caught by a large number of objects being smoked. The chief *conducted us to a framework of sticks, under which was burning a slow fire, and there they were, the right hands, I counted them, 81 in all.* The chief told Sheppard, "See! Here is our evidence. I always have to cut off the right hands of those we kill in order to show the State how many we have killed. He proudly showed Sheppard some of the bodies the hands had come from. The smoking preserved the hands in the hot, moist climate, for it might be days or weeks before the chief could display them to the proper official and receive credit for his kills.



Sheppard had stumbled on one of the most grisly aspects of Leopold's rubber system. Like the hostage taking, the severing of hands was deliberate policy, as even high officials would later admit. *During my time in the Congo I was the first commissioner of the Equator district, recalled Charles Lemaire after his retirement. As soon as it was a question of rubber, I wrote to the government, 'To gather rubber in the district. ... one must cut off hands, noses and ears.'*

If a village refused to submit to the rubber regime, state or company troops or their allies sometimes shot everyone in sight, so that nearby villages would get the message. But on such occasions some European officers were mistrustful. For each cartridge issued to their soldiers they demanded proof that the bullet had been used to kill someone, not *wasted* in hunting or, worse yet, saved for possible use in a mutiny. The standard proof was the right hand from a corpse. Or occasionally not from a corpse. *Sometimes, said one officer to a missionary, soldiers shot a cartridge at an animal in hunting; they then cut off a hand from a living man.* In some military units there was even a *keeper of the hands*; his job was the smoking.

Sheppard was not the first foreign witness to see severed hands in the Congo, nor would he be the last. But the articles he wrote for missionary magazines about his grisly find were reprinted and quoted widely, both in Europe and the United States, and it is partly due to him that people overseas began to associate the Congo with severed hands. A half-dozen years after Sheppard's stark discovery, while attacking the expensive public works Leopold was building with his Congo profits, the socialist leader Emile Vandervelde would speak in the Belgian Parliament of *monumental arches which will someday be called the Arches of the Severed Hands.*

As news of the white man's soldiers and their baskets of severed hands spread through the Congo, a myth gained credence with Africans that was a curious reversal of the white obsession with black cannibalism. *The cans of corned beef seen in white men's houses, it was said, did not contain meat from the animals shown on the label; they contained chopped-up lives.*

**Source:** King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa; Adam Hochschild

## The Congo: An Experiment in Commercial Expansion

*A* private person, King Leopold II of Belgium had been made, by the great powers, ruler over what was estimated anywhere from eleven to twenty eight million natives in an area as large as the whole of Europe - that was the experiment. The administrative and commercial exploitation were interwoven into an institutionalised system of violence. A violence that was to lay the foundation for that which is seen to being reproduced in the regime of modern day despots like Foday Sankoh.

*I hope I do not need another operation on my left leg, the only source of personal physical support. I have undergone five surgeries on this single leg. It is not too good. Often it gets swollen and I have to go through the painful and depressing ordeal of having some fluid removed from the leg. Attempts at fitting a prosthetic leg have been painful and unsuccessful since the amputation is at the top of the thigh.*

*Counseling sessions at the camp have provided me hope for the future. Through the Evangelical Lutheran Church Amputee Education Plan, I am now enrolled at a Women's Vocational Training Center. At the end of the training, I have learnt to read and write in English, become skilled in dressmaking and polished my skill in gar-tie dyeing and batik.*

*All this is happening, but the memory of this horrible experience that I have gone through and the loss of my family haunt me, and I wonder whether I will be able to have a normal life and a family again.*

*Nine years of war is enough for Sierra Leone. We cry for sustainable peace that will ensure that the horrors of war never happen again. The terrible things that have happened to people can never be undone. Legal procedures against criminals cannot undo the pains. Total disarmament and reconstruction of Sierra Leone is the only hope. Only when those who are responsible for our suffering express remorse and ask for forgiveness will justice be achieved.*



\* Extract from the WCC Women to Women  
Solidarity Ecuminical Team Visit to Sierra Leone,  
November 12 - 22, 2000

*Early history*

A society that existed centuries ago with Manda-speaking peoples of several ethnic groups was *discovered* by the Portuguese in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the city now called Freetown became a port for the extraction of ivory. In 1787, the British began to bring freed slaves from Jamaica, and they placed these English-speaking Christians in Sierra Leone – hence the name Freetown for the capital city. Between 1807 and 1864, 50,000 slaves were settled in Sierra Leone. The British tried to homogenise the slaves, who were originally brought to Jamaica from all over West Africa, and they imposed Creole on them. It is now the lingua franca of the country. Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, trade was initiated in diamonds and timber, both of which were found in plenty in this beautiful and mineral-rich West African country. In 1896 the British assumed political control over Sierra Leone in the European *scramble for Africa*. After some 60 years of struggle, the country became independent in 1961. Since 1991 the country has been at war with the Sierra Leone army fighting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under the leadership of Foday Sankoh. It has been a bloody and violent war, killing and maiming thousands, *the most brutal war in modern times* one woman told us.

*Recent history leading to the war and the present*

As we as a team were preparing for our departure to Sierra Leone, a ceasefire agreement was signed on November 10, 2000 in Abuja, Nigeria, between the Sierra Leone government and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). This generated some hope that a lasting peace might finally be realised. An unconditional one-month cease-fire, ending on December 10, was agreed upon. It was intended that by that time, progress on the commitments made by the RUF to continue with disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation, started under the earlier Lomé Peace Agreement signed in July 1999, would be examined.

Over the last 10 years, several peace-making agreements have been made, and repeatedly violated. The conflict has proved to be very complex and has its roots in years of poverty and misrule, a marginalised younger generation, as well as the unrest in neighbouring Liberia.

When our delegation arrived on November 14, 2000 in Freetown, Jordanian and Indian troops were about to leave the country, with new groups from Bangladesh, Ghana, and South Africa expected to arrive. Enquiring into the reasons why efficient UN troops were leaving the country, we came across some confidential and controversial information within UNAMSIL, referring to conflicting interests among major players in the diamond racket. Until this time, UNAMSIL had worked side by side with the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) on the regional level.

\* Aruna Gnanadason, a council member of the AWHRC and from the World Council of Churches, was part of the team.



However, deployment of military equipment and coordination and deployment of UN peacekeepers in some of the provinces is underway and, depending on the battalion, this operation is more or less successfully accomplished. In some provinces the UN soldiers are highly respected; in other provinces their presence is not welcome due to their poor performance, we are told. Opinions among the public varies - some merely tolerate the UN while others welcome them. The UN presence is recognised as a sign of international solidarity, but there is little or no confidence that UNAMSIL will be able to protect the civilian population in case of new attacks by the rebels. This is due to the humiliation of the UN when rebels managed to take UN peacekeepers hostage and also because UN soldiers are insufficiently equipped. Additionally, there is the fact that the UN mandate was only recently modified to include a military component. On the other hand, the ECOMOG (West African intervention force) was considered to be efficient and effective. But not everybody trusted them, and allegations of human rights violations by ECOMOG are often referred to.

It seems to be a common consensus that as long as there is no effective control of the diamond-mining areas, there will be little incentive for the warring parties to stop the fighting. Much profit is made from the smuggling of diamonds, and in the trading of arms and drugs. The report of the UN panel of experts on diamond smuggling and illegal arms trade issued in December 2000 gives strong evidence of the involvement of the neighbouring Liberian government and other routes for smuggling in the region, such as through Gambia. Even though the report acknowledges that it would be difficult to eliminate the illicit diamond trading entirely with official licensing systems, it affirms that a great deal could be done to make it more difficult for thieves to operate and for rebel groups to use this particular commodity to buy weapons.

At the time of writing this report in early January 2001, there was consensus that very little had been achieved during the 30-day ceasefire between the Sierra Leone government and the RUF negotiators, which formally expired on December 10. UN peacekeepers, restricted by their mandate and the need for more personnel, have not moved into rebel-held areas. Elections planned for 2001 will not be held on schedule if rebel-held areas are not under governmental or UNAMSIL control.

New developments in January 2001 show that overlapping wars cause chaos throughout West Africa. The situation in Guinea's border region is fast developing into a humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of displaced, relocated people and refugees on the move. There is real danger that, once again, innocent civilians will be caught in the cross-fire in Sierra Leone's decade-long civil conflict, trapped on all sides by the RUF, by rebels from Liberia, or caught in the defence forces of Guinea, and by mercenaries fighting on all sides. Vulnerable refugees, children, old people, women and premature babies have little chance of surviving such exposure. Despite some repatriated refugees, UNHCR does not want to be seen as encouraging people to move from one war zone to another, and does not promote repatriation to Sierra Leone because security conditions in much of the country are not conducive for the return of refugees.

Unlike other conflicts in Africa, which are shaped by ethnic, tribal or religious tensions, and in spite of attempts by different leaders to divide the civilian population, religious and ethnic tolerance is widely practiced in Sierra Leone. This fact was reported by the current president of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Kabbah, who stated on the occasions of Ramadan, Christmas and New Year 2001 that this year's observances *remind us that we Sierra Leoneans are still blessed with one of the greatest resources for peace-building and national reconciliation today, namely religious tolerance. We take pride in the fact that we respect each other's religious beliefs. Equally, we are proud to tell the world that the conflict in Sierra Leone is not based on tribal or religious differences.*

Home was  
Where I have always been  
Regardless of the years  
Or the distance between

## Why do I have to live away from my homeland



*Testimony on the War of Occupation  
Om Ali, Palestine/Jordan*

*I will tell you how we were pushed away by the Zionists. Away from our land in 1948.*

*When the Israeli forces entered Palestine in the village of Deer Tarif, they started immediately to kill members of my family. Only three of us survived. We ran away to Deer Ammar. I was lost with my sisters for about three months. We had no clue as to the whereabouts of our family. One day my cousin was shot dead together with her father. Her corpse was lying in the street for a week under the burning sun. She was covered with blood and her body started to stink. None could bring her back home. When we came out from Deer Ammar we went to the refugee camp. We have suffered tremendously from poverty, hunger, humiliation, torture etc. I myself was deprived of education. We were all scattered in the refugee camps with no light...no education, no health. We lived in there for three years, and then we moved to the Wihdete refugee camp. They offered us a very small house; we were seven people altogether. The oppression we faced in those camps can hardly be described. There were no schools, no social life, etc. We lived with no nation. We lived our lives as permanent refugees. In the camps, employment was very scarce, causing hunger and extreme poverty. We had no electricity, no water. No one in the world has ever lived in the conditions we did in the camps. We are asking the world to stand by our side and to support our cause, our return to Palestine. It is very difficult for me to speak out my testimony due to the oppression that does not seem to end. All people have their own nations except people of Palestine.*



*My country is a travel bag,  
a travel bag is my country.  
no platforms  
no walls...*

*I would like to share with you my experience of the day we were pushed away from my land in 1948 when I was a child. The Jewish soldiers attacked the house and ordered each one of us to run away immediately. My cousin was trying to escape when an Israeli soldier started to shoot all over her body till she fell down in a pool of blood. Her mother was passing by and she commented **Poor girl! How much did she have to suffer! How much pain will she cause to her family!?** The poor mother did not know that the victim was her own daughter. This horrifying sight will be engraved in my memory for as long as I am living.*

*This savage Zionist came and stole our land, so it is for us to fight and struggle trying to get it back. Palestine is my country! Palestine is my country! Palestine is my country! There is a second story that I would like to share with you which is the story of a girl from the Nassra village. She used to live in the camps. She did her best to go back to Palestine. Israel refused. They told her, **you have no proof of identity.** She did not know what to do. So I decided to take her, give her shelter and treat her like a member of my family until she died. How can we speak of human rights when the owner of the land gets thrown away from that land while the enemy comes from USA, Russia, Europe and settles down? I wonder which human rights you are talking about? Which international law, NGO, social movement, etc?*

*If one wants to speak about the story of my people, it will take him at least 52 years since 1948.*

*No country in the world has respect for us, they tell us **go back to your nation,** but which nation? Why do I have to live away from my homeland?*

## Nationalism, Human Rights and Interpretation

*Constructing a new universality* has preoccupied various international authorities since World War II. Some milestones are, of course, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Conventions, and an impressive battery of protocols, resolutions, and prescriptions for the treatment of refugees, minorities, prisoners, workers, children, students, and women. All of these explicitly provide for the protection of individuals, regardless of their race, colour, nationality, or creed. In addition, a wide range of nongovernmental, national, and international agencies, such as Amnesty, or the Organization for Human Rights, or the Human Rights Watch committees, monitor and publicise human-rights abuses. In all this it is perfectly clear that an underlying *critique of nationalist discourse* has been taking place, since it is national governments acting in the name of national security who have infringed the rights of individuals and groups who are perceived as standing outside the nationalist consensus. Yet to criticise the brutality of the Iraqi regime today in the name of universal human rights is by no means to have truly mounted "a critique of nationalist discourse." At roughly the same time that the Iraqi Baath was universally concerned for its oppression of the Kurdish people, the Saudi government unilaterally expelled 800,00 Yemeni workers as vengeance for the Yemeni government's abstention at the UN, that is, its refusal to join in the Security Council resolution pushed through by the United States to go to war against Iraq. After the Gulf War, the Kuwaiti government, which was justly restored to sovereignty by Operation Desert Storm, proceeded to arrest, detain, or expel and harass Palestinians (and other aliens) because, it was argued, the PLO had supported Iraq. Little official condemnation of the Saudi or Kuwaiti governments was recorded in the West.

....there's no land under my feet,  
so I can die the way I want....

*Palestine was the land of my ancestors. It should be the land of my children and great-grandchildren.*

*One day I swore to infiltrate the Palestinian revolutionary troops so that I can understand the principles of struggle and start fighting my way back to my homeland. My homeland, which was taken away from me by force. Palestine, which I can only see through TV.*

*The Palestinian revolution reached Jordan in 1967. At that time I was kidnapped by the Israeli forces and had to spend years in jail as a political prisoner.*

*Now my only desire is to go back to my homeland of 1948 and not of 1967. I would like to go to Haifa, Yaffa, Tabaria, Bit Labana and all the Palestinian villages.*

*I have inherited this key from my mother and will keep it for my children and for my grandchildren.*

*We will look after this key till the day we go back to Palestine. Then we will use it to unlock the door that has been forcibly locked down by the Zionists.*





....there's no sky  
around me  
to burrow into the tents of the  
prophets.

my back  
against a wall,  
a fallen/ wall....

I cite these paradoxes as a way of emphasising the continued absence of what Chatterjee calls *a new universality*. For in the Western community of nations presided over by the United States, an old, rather than new, nationalist identity has been reinforced, one that derives its ideological resources from precisely the notion of that high culture of which Matthew Arnold and Ernest Gellner both speak. Now, however, it has given itself an internationalised and normative identity with authority and hegemony to adjudicate the relative value of human rights. All the discourse that purports to speak for civilisation, human rights, principle, universality, and acceptability accrues, to it, whereas as was the case with the Gulf War, the United States managed its fortunes, so to speak, mobilized on its behalf, took it over. We now have a situation therefore that makes it very difficult to construct another universality alongside this one. So completely has the power of the United States – under which, in some measure, we all live – invested even the vocabulary of universality that the search for *new ideological means* to challenge it has become, in fact, more difficult, and therefore more exactly a function of a renewed sense of intellectual morality.

This morality can no longer reside comfortably and exclusively in the condemnation of approved enemies – the old Soviet Union, Libya, Iraq, terrorism, and so on. Nor, as the most cursory of surveys will confirm, can it persuasively consist of extolling, in the manner of Francis Fukuyama, the final triumph of the bourgeois liberal state and the end of history. Nor can a sense of the intellectual commitment needed be fulfilled by professional or disciplinary specialisation. There has to be a firmer, more rigorous procedure than any of these. For the intellectual, to be “for” human rights means, in effect, to be willing to venture interpretations of those rights in the same place and with the same language employed by the dominant power, to dispute its hierarchy and methods, to elucidate what it has hidden, to pronounce what it has silenced or rendered unpronounceable.

These intellectual procedures require, above all, an acute sense not of how things are separated but of how they are connected, mixed, involved, embroiled, linked. For years South African apartheid was deemed the problem of a continent both distant and irrelevant to the ordinary pursuit of life in the Western metropolis. The Reagan and Thatcher administrations, for example, opposed the scrupulous enforcement of sanctions against South Africa, preferring instead a policy of *constructive engagement*. The assumption was that what took place in South Africa was *their* business, which amounted to approving the domination of a black people by a white minority purporting to be Western, advanced, like *us*. It was not until the anti apartheid movement, through organised boycotts, strikes, lectures, and seminars, brought consciousness of apartheid close to the centre of Western political discourse that the contradiction between public declarations of support for human rights and the dramatically discriminatory policies of the minority government became untenable. A worldwide campaign against Pretoria, with American and European students demonstrating for divestment of holdings in South African business, took hold, then made its influence felt on South Africa, with results that have produced major political changes inside the country – namely, the release of Nelson Mandela, negotiations between the ANC and the de Klerk government, and so forth.

....my country is a travel bag  
and my travel bag is a country of gypsies  
a people living in tents of songs and smoke  
a people looking for a place  
in shrapnel and the rain.

my face against a flower,  
a livecoal/flower....

South Africa in the past two years has been a relative success for human rights. A greater challenge, however, is the contest between Israel and the Palestinian people, a case of particularly inflamed and compelling human rights abuse with which I should like to conclude. When we ask ourselves, *Whose human rights are we trying to protect?* we need to acknowledge frankly that individual freedoms and rights are set irrevocably in a national context. To discuss human freedom today, therefore, is to speak about the freedom of persons of a particular nationality or ethnic or religious identity whose life is subsumed within a national territory ruled by a sovereign power. It is also true that withholders of freedom, its abusers, also belong to a nation – most often also a state that practices its politics in the name of that nation's best, or most expedient, interests. The difficulty for interpretation politically as well as philosophically is how to disentangle discourse and principle on the one hand from practice and history on the other. Added to that difficulty is the complication in the Palestinian instance of the international dimension of the problem, since *historical Palestine itself is no ordinary piece of geography but perhaps more drenched in religious, cultural, and political significance than any on earth.*

What has never been in doubt are the actual identities of the opponents in historical Palestine, although a considerable modern campaign on behalf of Zionism has either downplayed or tried to eliminate the very notion of a Palestinian national identity. I mention this at the outset because one of our charges from the organising committee of these Amnesty Lectures was *to consider the consequences of deconstruction of the self for the liberal tradition.* The irony is that the liberal tradition in the West was always very eager to deconstruct the Palestinian self in the process of constructing the Zionist-Israeli self. Almost from the very beginnings of the European movement to colonise Palestine on behalf of Zionism, a strain first introduced, I believe, by Balfour has remained the lodestar for Western liberalism. Its classic formulation is provided not in the 1917 Balfour Declaration, but in a comment made by Balfour in a memorandum two years later:

*The contradiction between the letter of the Covenant and the policy of the Allies [the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918 promising the Arabs of former Ottoman colonies that as a reward for supporting the Allies they would have their independence] is even more flagrant in the case of the independent nation of Palestine than in that of the independent nation of Syria. For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American Commission has been going through the forms of asking what they are. The four great powers are committed to Zionism and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land. In my opinion that is right.*



....my country is a travel bag  
I spread out as a bed  
and sleep on it,  
bury my friends in it  
and die on it.

my hand against a star,  
a star/tent....

Something like this sentiment, with its hierarchical imposition of Zionism on *the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs* of Palestine, has remained constant for the major figures of Western liberalism, especially after World War II. Think of Reinhold Niebuhr, or Edmund Wilson, or Isaiah Berlin, of the British Labour Party, of the Socialist International, of the American Democratic party, of the Socialist international, of the American Democratic party, of every American president from that party, of every major candidate who has spoken in its name, with the exception of Jesse Jackson, and you have that evaluation maintained and given force. *There was hardly a Western liberal during the late 1940s through the 1970s who did not explicitly say that the establishment of Israel in 1948 was one of the great achievements of the postwar era, and did not think it at all necessary to add that this was so for its victors in particular.* From the point of view of the survivors of the fearful massacre of the European Jews it was a central achievement: there is no point at all in denying that. The Jews who came to Palestine were the victims of Western civilization, totally unlike the French military who conquered Algeria, the British felons forced to settle Australia, or those who have ravaged Ireland for several hundred years, or the Boers and the British who still rule in South Africa. But admitting that the difference in identity between Zionists and white settlers in Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas is an important one is not to underplay the grave consequences that tie all the groups together.

*The irony is that the liberal tradition in the West was always very eager to deconstruct the Palestinian self in the process of constructing the Zionist-Israeli self*

....my country is on my shoulder,  
traces of my land in a foreign soul.

my heart against a rock,  
a rock/freedom....

An enormous amount of ink has been spilled trying to prove that, for example, Palestine was basically empty before the Zionists came, or that the Palestinians who left in 1948 did so because their leaders told them to, or that, as argued by Cynthia Ozick in the New York Times on February 19, 1992, to speak of Palestinian-occupied territories is *cynically programmatic – an international mendacity justified neither by history nor by a normal understanding of language and law*. All this amounts to trying to prove that Palestinians do not exist as a national group. Why were so many legions of propagandists, polemicists, publicists, and commentators working hard to prove something that, were it true, would have required hardly any effort at all? What Ozick and company are going on about is that something – namely, the existence of a people with a clear national identity – has stood in the way of the liberal notion, stood in the way and attached itself to Israel as shadow attaches itself to a person. *For in fact the Jewish victims of European anti-Semitism came to Palestine and created a new victim, the Palestinians, who today are nothing less than the victims of the victims. Hardly anything can mitigate the shattering historical truth that the creation of Israel meant the destruction of Palestine.* The elevation of a new people to sovereignty in the Holy Land has meant the subjugation, dispossession, and oppression of another.

There is nothing in the repertory of liberalism that condones this, except, of course, its history of making exceptions whenever the going got a little rough, for example, when the French troops undertook a *razzia* or two in Algeria and found Tocqueville willing to excuse them, or when Spencer recommended the virtual elimination of the Irish race, or when Mill ruled that Indian independence should be postponed again and again. Yes, we have come a long way beyond that today, when no one is willing to defend apartheid in a public forum, or when a reasonable semblance of Irish independence has been assured, or when over forty-five states in Africa and at least fifty more elsewhere containing formerly colonised people constitute the new nations.



....what do you want?  
you're only a myth  
walking to another myth.

a flag?

what's the use of a flag...?  
can it shield a city from bombs?....

Look squarely at the Palestinian situation today and what you see fairly beggars one's powers adequately to represent it. You see a nation of over five million people scattered throughout various jurisdictions, without official nationality, without sovereignty, without flag and passport, without self-determination or political freedom. Yet their enemies are still interpreted as having the right to keep them that way and, from the reigning power of the day, to garner the largest amount of foreign aid in the most extensive aid program in history. Words like *democratic* and *Western* flutter around Israel even as the 750,000 Palestinians who are Israeli citizens constitute a little under 20 percent of the population and are treated as a fourth-rate minority called *non-Jews*, legally prevented from buying, leasing, or renting land *held in trust for the Jewish people*, vastly under represented in the Knesset and, for example, given only 1 percent of the education budget, no rights of return, and none of the kinds of entitlement reserved exclusively for Jews. Since 1967, Israel has been in an unrelieved, uncompromising military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and their almost two million Palestinians. Since the *intifada* began in late 1987, well over 1,100 unarmed Palestinians have been killed by Israeli troops; over 2,000 houses have been demolished; over 15,000 political prisoners languish in Israeli jails, twice as high per capita as their counterparts under South African apartheid at its worst; twenty-four-hour curfews over the whole of the territories are the rule; over 120,000 trees have been uprooted; schools and universities have been closed for years at a time, and one university, Bir Zeit, has been kept closed

for four consecutive years; thousands of acres have been expropriated, whole villages rendered destitute, over 150 settlements established, and about 80,000 Jewish settlers introduced into the heart of Arab population centres there to live according to laws that allow them to be armed and to kill and beat Arabs with total impunity, all this despite numerous, but alas unenforced, UN resolutions; at least 300 Palestinian leaders have been deported in defiance of the Geneva and Hague conventions; hundreds of books have been banned; the word *Palestine* as well as the colours of the Palestinian flag are forbidden, and when they have been used to decorate a cake or to paint a picture, the offenders have been jailed; punitive taxes are levied against the whole Palestinian population without allowing that population any form of representation or recourse. As for the economy and natural resources, such as water, they are manipulated and exploited by Israel with not the slightest suggestion of proportionality or fairness.

*For in fact the Jewish victims of  
European anti-Semitism came to  
Palestine and created a new  
victim, the Palestinians, who  
today are nothing less than the  
victims of the victims. Hardly  
anything can mitigate the  
shattering historical truth that the  
creation of Israel meant the  
destruction of Palestine*

....how short is the journey  
how large is the thought  
how small is the state.

Mahmoud Darwish

Human rights abuses by the Iraqi and Syrian governments against their own people are certainly appalling. No one can deny that, and no one does. In Israel's case, an extraordinary split exists: here are policies against the Palestinian people that have a forty-four-year-old history, and yet the immense financial, political, and discursive subsidies from Western countries pour in regardless, as if to excuse Israel for what it does. When he spoke against the infamous *Zionism is a form of racism* resolution, which was repealed by the UN last autumn, George Bush summed up the case for repeal in a symptomatic linguistic turn: Zionism, he said, is not racism because of the suffering of the Jewish people. But what, a Palestinian might ask, if that history of suffering itself had not deterred Zionism from discriminating systematically against the Palestinian people, much as the glory of France did not deter it from decimating the population of Algeria in a few decades? For the truth is that Jewish and Palestinian suffering exist in and belong to the same history: the task of interpretation is to acknowledge that link, not to separate them into separate and unconnected spheres.

Palestine, I believe, is today the touchstone case for human rights, not because the argument for it can be made as elegantly simple as the case for South African liberation, but because it cannot be made simple. Speaking as an involved Palestinian, I doubt that any of us has figured out how our particularly trying history interlocks with that of the Jews who dispossessed and now try to rule us. But we know these histories cannot be separated, and that the Western liberal who tries to do so violates, rather than comprehends, both. There is hardly an instance when the connection between freedom and interpretation is as urgent, as literally concrete, as it is for the Palestinian people, a large part of whose existence and fate has been interpreted away in the West in order to deny us the same freedom and interpretation granted to Israeli Jews. The time has finally come to join and recognise these two peoples together as indeed their common actuality in historic Palestine already has joined them together. Only then can interpretation be for, rather than only about, freedom.

**Source:** Extracts from *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said.





Session III

## Wars against Civilisations

*The militarised nation state system has found new ways of excluding and exterminating the other, legitimising yet dehumanising social hierarchies. Women victims of institutionalised systems of violence like colonisation, apartheid and the caste system testified to the wars against the other.*

*Visual Testimony*

**Expert Witness:**

Vicky Corpuz, Philippines

Thenjiwe Mtinso, South Africa

Albertina Sisulu, South Africa

Sushila, India

Maureen Wenzel, Australia

Rosalinda Santiz Diaz, Chiapas, Mexico

Ayan Mahmoud, Somalia

Mejra Dautovic, Bosnia

Susanna Ounei, Kanak Islands, Aotearoa

*Apartheid*

*Dalit/Caste*

*Stolen Generation*

*Indigenous*

*Racism/Refugee*

*Mass Graves*

*Indigenous/Racism*

## Vicky Corpuz, Philippines

### Expert Witness



*President McKinley justified this as **manifest destiny**. He wrote in his memoirs that one night he could not sleep. He was agonising because he wanted to know what to do with the Philippines. Then he said the voice of God came to him and God said –It is the **manifest destiny** of the United States to colonise the Philippines and bring civilisation to the little brown brothers in the Pacific. When sunrise broke he called up Manila and ordered Admiral Dui to fire the gunboats and cannons. This is a familiar story to most of us who are colonised. What gave these brutal colonisers the right to define the colonised as backward and themselves as civilised? What gave them the right to destroy vibrant civilisations in Asia, the Pacific, Africa, the Arab world and Latin America?*

*How can the world regard them as civilised when they are the ones who inflicted the worst forms of barbarism on the majority of peace loving people in this world. People who are self-determining not just in the way they are, not just in the way they care for Mother Earth, not just in the way they govern themselves but also in the way they resolve conflicts between themselves. Colonialism, neo-colonialism and now globalisation are underpinned by racism and racial discrimination. The fundamental assumption of colonisers is that their ways are inherently superior to those they colonise. To assert this superiority they denigrate them, demonise and destroy the diversity of cosmologies, religions, cultures, and economic and political systems of the colonised. The rich civilisations of the others were subsumed under the western civilisation of the Europeans and **Pax Americana**. Traditional religions were forbidden. The relatively equal status of women with men, which they found among the colonised, was scorned.*



When the Spaniards colonised the Philippines in the 1500s their historians wrote that the *native women were behaving like men* and that these native women should be taught to behave in a civilised way. Since our histories were written by our colonisers they concealed the fact that they found self-determining communities and that there were countless revolts and revolutions against them. Racism and racial discrimination were institutionalised through laws, which illegalise or totally undermine economic systems, customary law and government systems. Racist doctrines such as *Terra Nullius* declared that there were no people in Australia. Aside from being uprooted from their ancestral territories, children were separated from their parents and made to forget who they were. These children were the so-called *stolen generation* of Australia. The obliteration of diverse civilisations of the colonised, or of the other, is a crime against humanity. The colonial powers still have to accept this barbarism as a gross violation of the collective rights of people to live as communities, as tribes, as nations and as civilisations. The saving grace of humanity is that the colonised and oppressed rose up to fight against the colonisers. This valiant effort brought independence and the creation of nation states. Unfortunately the colonised states were created in the image of the coloniser's nation state. Their political systems were clones of the so-called western democracies, which were created after World War II and which universalised these systems and laws even if these were not appropriate to some countries. Thus what we have are *local states, which are run by local elites as if these are their corporations*. It is not surprising that in many cases they side with the ex-colonial powers and multinational corporations rather than with the poor in their own country. The *national security doctrine* is used by the governments to perpetuate themselves in power because that is the order of the day for a lot of countries. The borders were carved after independence to divide peoples and families into different countries and states. Indigenous people like the Nagas had to be divided between India and Burma, between Manipur and Nagaland.

*Sisters, friends and comrades, our presence here today and the increasing movement against all inequalities based on race, class, caste, gender and ethnicity are evidence that oppressed peoples can only take so much. The ongoing wars today, whether it is the bombing of Iraq, the continued occupation of Palestine, or the plundering by oil corporations of indigenous peoples' lands, are all wars against civilisations. In many cases so-called ethnic wars are being fanned by those in power to continue perpetuating their dominance.*

*We need to reclaim our civilisations and our cosmologies, which have been distorted and denigrated by the powerful. We need to **redefine and reconceptualise the notion of rights**. We have to bring the ex-colonial powers and those nation states to be made accountable for the loss of diverse civilisations and cultures. We have to remind governments in our land that their mandate is to give justice to those who are in the margins, to those who are excluded. If they start prioritising the rights of corporations over and above the people in their countries then it is even better that there are no such things as governments. We have to remind international institutions like the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation, to stop promoting the rights of corporations in the G7 countries and their global market economy at the expense of sustenance economies and sustainable livelihoods of women, persons and indigenous people.*

*Finally, we have to remind them and the United Nations that it is not their role to just implement the wish of **Pax Americana**. If it can apply the vehicle for peace and justice then it should be transformed. Its charter starts with the phrase – **We the people**—if it is not there to serve the people, then we should reclaim it and make it serve our interest and the interest of those who have been oppressed and colonised.*

*Thank you very much.*





## Thenjiwe Mtinso, South Africa

### Expert Witness



*We are not guilty  
of attacking your integrity,  
taking away your identity.  
perhaps it's your hysteria,  
incompetence,  
idiocy.*

Meiling Jin

*This paper is a brief narrative of the context for what the South African women shared at the Women's Court at the opening session in the parliament on March 6, 2001, as they took everyone on their long painful road to freedom, a road that they were still trudging. Their stories can only be understood if we understand the context of colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy in South Africa.*

Colonialism, under whatever guise, knows only three major principles - subjugation, exploitation and profit. Where it has landed, and in Africa in particular, it uses the colonised, it appropriates or buys them in their chase for profit. If it cannot buy them, if it cannot suppress them, then it violates them in more ways than one. Of course it takes different forms - it is like a lizard adopting the colour of the place it has landed on. In Africa, for instance, in an effort to completely destroy the systems, institutions and the values of the African society and to impose imperialism with an unnerving totality, the colonialists were not satisfied merely with holding a people in their grip. On top of that, by emptying their brains of all form and content of what they once had, *they turned the past of the oppressed people, distorted, disfigured and ultimately destroyed it*. No longer did we as a people, as a nation, have an African culture. No longer did we have that dance, that poetry, those stories that we told, but we were told we were *Barbarians* with a barbaric culture. No longer was there an African Continent but the *Dark Continent* with no history except tribal wars. We were reduced to such images, and for a long time the African child sought solace in the values and culture and everything that was white.

Colonialism takes the form and shape of whomever or whatever it lands on. In our instance, it took the shape of apartheid. Simply put, apartheid means oppression, suppression, exploitation and subjugation of the black people in general and the Africans in particular. Apartheid was based on racism and capitalism. Black people were supposed to be a subhuman race whose purpose in life was to serve the interests of the white people who, in turn, were the human beings whose mission in life was to accumulate wealth. Apartheid was based on exclusivity - the African majority was totally excluded politically and economically. Apartheid, euphemistically called *separate development*, was institutionalised in the state, the laws, the economy, the political and educational systems, residential spaces, access to resources - every aspect of the South Africans' lives reflected the power relations between the roles of whites (the humans/masters) and blacks (the sub-humans/slaves).

Apartheid produced *two world(s)* in one country; the white world that was advanced, highly developed and had the characteristics of the first world, and the black world which was poorly developed with a deteriorating reserve economy, with little or no infrastructure, where poverty and marginalisation became the daily experience of the African majority. The critical link between the two worlds was that the African world was an important source of cheap African labour needed to maintain and reproduce apartheid colonialism. The other important character of the system was that it had to rely on repression, brutality and violence to maintain itself.



But apartheid, indeed colonialism and any other social oppression, does not exist on its own, in its so-called pure form. It interacts with and co-exists in other kinds of social relations, or power relations. Colonialism brought in its trail patriarchy, the system of domination of women by men and male control at all levels of society based on the socially constructed notions of gender, gender roles and gender relations. That patriarchy interfaced with, distorted and reinforced the indigenous forms of patriarchy and was used to benefit apartheid. Thus capitalism, apartheid and patriarchy created a complex, painful and violent system for black women, especially the rural and poor. Every aspect of black women's lives was regulated, and where the state failed to control them, it unleashed its machinery of brutality and violence - the police, courts, the army and prisons who used banishment, detention without trial, exile, imprisonment, torture, sexual abuse even in detention and all atrocities reminiscent of the holocaust.

This intersection and co-existence of patriarchy within apartheid and racial capitalism produced what other writers called a *patchwork quilt* of patriarchies. Women experience patriarchy differently from each other according to, for instance, their class, race, religion and any other social identities. White women largely benefited from colonial apartheid. It offered them the slave labour of domestics. There could be no women solidarity between the *madam/slave owner* and the *maid/slave*. Although the white women experienced patriarchy, they escaped the drudgery of the private domestic sphere through using the labour of other women. Black, poor and rural women suffered the brunt as they were at the bottom of the heap.

### *War against apartheid, colonialism and patriarchy*

The South African women told the World Court about the pain, the agony, the fear, and the anger. They brought, very vividly, images of brutal police as they whipped children, as they threw teargas at protesting women, as they charged against unarmed students. They described in muted tones their experiences in the jails where they survived without food or water for days on end, not only enduring the torture of the security police but that of not knowing how their children were surviving without them. They narrated the grim stories of denigration and sexual abuse behind bars. They joked about the welcomed *relief and pleasure* of physical torture after the long psychological one of being locked *incommunicado* for weeks without ever hearing a human voice or seeing even a streak of light. They painted, in our minds, pictures of naked women under torture, of brutalised women in jail, of haunted women in banishment, of hunted women in exile. And yet in simple language, they took us along the road of women's mass actions, protest marches, demonstrations, underground units, military training and combat. They laughed at the stupidity of the system that so undermined women that it did not search them as they smuggled revolutionary books, leaflets, and weapons across borders and past roadblocks. They shared with us the joy and the sorrow of a revolution. They proudly told us how the streets, villages and every inch of South African soil was turned into a battlefield. They remembered how they were convinced that victory was certain and gave all they had to bring that conviction to fruition. In a calm and quiet manner they depicted the commitment, bravery, sacrifice, heroism, resilience. In their sombre voices we detected no bitterness, no grudge but we knew they bore the scars.



## A Reflection


*It was significant that the World Court of Women against War, for Peace took place on International Women's Day on March 8, 2001. It gave women, and indeed all those committed to the eradication of colonialism and all forms of discrimination and exploitation, an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come and the struggles ahead. It was a moment to celebrate women's victories internationally and strategise on how to use some of the democratic spaces that we've won as beachheads for more battles and struggles ahead. It was quite important that the World Court took place on this particular day because we, as sisters across borders, were saying, "our freedom is not going to be a donation from any particular nation; it is something that we have to fight for." Thus we gathered, we talked, we hugged, we cried, we laughed. We spoke different languages and yet we understood each other. We had different lives and yet similar experiences. We came from different countries, continents and yet we were bound to each other, we were one. We opened our wounds, we felt the warmth as others rushed to embrace us and began to assist us in dealing with the pain of open wounds. We knew they would help us heal. We marveled at each other's resilience, we wondered how we could have survived what we had gone through and were still going through. Yet we knew the answer - we survived and are not broken because we are women. We affirmed the South African women's battle cry "Now you have touched the women, you have dislodged a boulder, you will die".*

Thenjiwe Mtinso

They, in matter of fact tones, told us that even if they had not wanted to struggle they had no choice. After all they had no present and their past had been erased by apartheid. Their future, that of their country and of their children depended on their struggle.

These are the women who opened their wounds and those of many others to the World Court. But even as they opened these, like others from all over the world, they displayed their resilience. They represent the very black women who are extending the hand of friendship to other sisters - sisters who not only benefited from apartheid and colonialism but who actively joined their men in repressing and exploiting them. They are the very ones who, though accepting that there can be no universal sisterhood across the class, race and other divides, called on us to build a strong dynamic Women's Movement that can take our struggle for emancipation to greater heights. They are the very ones that extended the hand of friendship to their oppressors at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission when for the first time they met those who had killed their children, whose bodies and graves they had never found. These are the women who said victory has been attained over apartheid but the war against racism, sexism, capitalism still continues. These are the Masisulu's, the Lydia Kompe's, the Mildred Lesia's who talked on behalf of those who filled the hall and the millions more who could not even afford to attend the World Court. On their behalf they resolutely and vehemently declared *Never again...*

The beauty of all the stories we heard, horrific as they were, was that women have been taught by the struggle itself and the march cannot be halted, diverted or reversed. The Progressive Women's Movement is building up within countries and across oceans and borders. Women are in motion continuing to do battle against all forms of oppression and exploitation. The stories bore testimony to that. They confirmed the South African women's slogan that *...a woman holds the knife at its sharp end...*



*A lock will turn.  
Gates will close,  
till next week's visit.  
And I'll say to myself  
Bring me the freedom in your eyes.*

Aziz Nesin  
Turkey

It is necessary to keep alive  
memories of the past



*Testimony on Apartheid*  
*Albertina Sisulu, South Africa*

*It is significant that the World Court of Women against War, for Peace is taking place on International Women's Day, when we celebrate the struggles and victories of women around the world. As difficult as it is to talk about the past, as agonising as it is to take up painful memories of imprisonment, torture and separation from family and friends, I will give my testimony today. I do so in the belief that it is necessary to keep alive the memories of the past in order to ensure that its horrors will never ever be repeated in the present or the future.*



## Conflicts in Africa

*The last decade has seen almost the entire continent of Africa at war, from the seven or so countries directly involved in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to the Sierra Leone crisis and the war in Ethiopia/ Eritrea and the various other civil wars.*

There have been over 7.3 million refugees, and hundreds and thousands of people have been slaughtered. If this scale of destruction and fighting was in Europe, then people would be calling it World War III with the entire world rushing to report, provide aid, mediate and otherwise try to diffuse the situation.

Many things have contributed to the conflicts in Africa, including the artificial boundaries created by colonial rulers as they ruled and finally left Africa. The effect of this was to put many different ethnic people within a nation that did not reflect, or have the ability to accommodate, the cultural and ethnic diversity. The freedom from imperial powers is not a smooth transition. It also comes with the natural struggle to rebuild. *In the 1870s European nations were bickering over themselves about the spoils of Africa. In order to prevent further conflict between them, they convened at the Berlin Conference of 1885 to lay down the rules on how they would partition up Africa between themselves.*

In addition, countries such as the USA and former Soviet Union in their Cold War supported various regimes and dictatorships with disregard to how it has affected the people of these countries. The US, for example has delivered over \$ 1.5 billion worth of weapons to Africa.

*I am called to talk about apartheid. My first experience of racism was at the Johannesburg NAM European Hospital where I went for training as a nurse in 1940. The injustices in the hospital opened my eyes to the racial injustice in the wider society. I was introduced to my husband Walter Sisulu, whom I married in 1944. Between 1944 and 1955 we had five children. Despite continuous police harassment, we had a happy and stable family life until the political upheavals of the 1960s. Like millions of other South African families, our lives were turned upside down by the Schafeld massacre in March 1960. Amidst the entire political drama, we had to cope with the death of my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law Rose Bella in the space of a few months. On her deathbed, Rose Bella asked me to care for her two children; her son Gerald had already gone into exile in 1962. Shortly after the burial of his sister, Walter was sentenced to six years imprisonment and released on bail in April 1963. He skipped the bail and went underground. Two months later I became the first woman to be detained under the notorious 90-day detention law. My seventeen-year-old son Max had also made history by becoming the youngest person ever to be detained under the 90-day law. He went to jail with me. The police had arrested us in order to interrogate us about Walter's whereabouts. After Max was released from detention, the police continued to harass him so much that I arranged for him to go into exile. Little did I know that it would be another twenty-five years before I would see him again.*

*Walter, Nelson Mandela and other ANC leaders were arrested and tried at the famous Revoia trial. They narrowly escaped the death sentence, and on 11 June 1964, they were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robyn Island. In August 1964 I received the first of a series of banning. The banning orders meant that I could not leave my house except to go to work and back. I was not allowed to be part of any gathering. I was not allowed to communicate at all with other banned people. For most of the period I was banned, I had to report to the nearest police station once a week. In total I was banned for eighteen years, longer than any other person in South Africa. I missed my husband terribly, especially in the first years of the imprisonment when we were allowed only one visit every six months. I was confined to the Johannesburg area when I finally received the permit to visit the island. I had to apply to the chief magistrate of Johannesburg for permission to leave the district. He in turn had to refer my request to the security police, as sometimes the permit could expire during the rigmarole and I could miss my visit.*



Through the dark years of the sixties when the government appeared to have successfully crushed the liberation movement, I was one of the few political activists not in jail or exiled who managed to somehow continue with ANC work. Under difficult and dangerous circumstances we maintained the link between the international and external movements and provided some form of continuity in black resistance between the 1960s and 1970s. In June 1976, I personally witnessed the unfolding of the horrific drama that was rising. Hetta Peterson was the first child killed in the uprising around the corner from my house in Olango West. Police bullets whizzed past my own daughter, who was one of the demonstrators. I, as well as millions of South African women, were profoundly affected by the traumatic event. **No black mother who witnessed the madness of police shooting children in the 1976 school uprising remained untouched by the tragedy.** It radicalised black women in a manner that perhaps no other event has done. It drew women into the struggle at every level in order to demand that this kind of slaughter of our children be stopped. **Kill us if you must, we said, but in God's name leave our children alone.** I could cope with the consistent police raids, with my union orders, my banning orders. I could cope with my husband being in prison. But when the regime went for my children, the pain was unbearable.

In 1974, my eldest son Max was almost killed by a parcel bomb explosion at the ANC headquarters, and my daughter was arrested a few days before the June 16 demonstration.

During her eleven months of solitary confinement she was severely tortured. Shortly after her release in 1970, she went into exile. During the 1970s and 80s, my second eldest son also suffered periodical arrest and detention. My adopted son was arrested on charges of harbouring ANC guerillas. He was sentenced to five years on Robyn Island. Due to his role as a journalist, my youngest son became a cadet of security police. In 1981, he was banned and house arrested like me, then detained for 250 days. In June 1986, he was detained for almost two years, not long before he became the editor of the Anti-Apartheid newspaper, **New Nation**. On his release, he was so severely restricted that he could no longer work as a journalist. My eldest grandson was also detained for over nine months.

How do I feel about what has happened today? I can't even believe that everybody thinks as I do about what is happening to the women of the world. We suffered in South Africa with our children and our men, but as Reverend Desmond Tutu said, the women of South Africa stood by their men. We fought together for the freedom of our country. But this freedom also comes from you. You supported us. We couldn't have done it alone if we didn't have your help. We could not have done it alone if you had not sent us funds. I am grateful to this Court for allowing the women to come and narrate their experiences. This should continue; do it, my dear sisters.

I'm here as your mother. I'm here to say to you, **Alleluia, this Court is great.** That today the unity of women has brought you to our country, South Africa. **Let it happen again.**

Thank you very much.



*Now that we have discovered solace  
gathering with strangers  
different from ourselves;  
Could we not stretch our hands  
across one more divide  
to embrace those beyond our shores?*

Peggy Dulany

## Another form of racism and apartheid



*Testimony on Violence against Dalit Women*

*Presented by Ruth Manaroma and Jyothi Raj on behalf of Sushila, India*

I hereby present to the World Court of Women against War, for Peace held at Cape Town, South Africa on 8 March 2001, while we are commemorating the Women's Day, the story of conquest, subjugation, and war against a group of people called **Dalits**, the former untouchables in India and South Asian countries, who constitute 160 million in India and 260 million in South Asia.

The term **Dalit** literally means **broken** people who are the bottom of Hindu caste system; they suffer a precarious existence, shunned by much of society and made to undergo the experience of imposed social exclusion and ostracism.

The scriptural, philosophical, legal and political framework produced by the dominant brahminical ideology was constructed on the basis of hierarchical power and patriarchal culture. This system of caste oppression has neither concept of the human nor the concept of rights of individuals or communities.

Caste system in South Asia is perhaps the longest hierarchy in existence. Caste system encompasses a hierarchical order of social groups built on the racist notion of purity and pollution. In many Indian States, entire villages remain completely segregated by caste division.

A large-scale violation perpetrated on Dalits involving burning of homes and fields, murders, massacres, brutal and genocidal attacks, social boycott, and destruction of property are day-to-day experiences of Dalits and Dalit women. Victims of bonded labour, child labour, prostitution and **devadasis** (slave to Gods and men) come largely from Dalit communities. Even today they do not have access to village public wells to draw water or to public eating-places.



They have separate glasses for drinking tea or coffee at the village restaurants. They cannot enter the Hindu temples. Intercaste marriages are prohibited both by religion and practice. Atrocities against Dalits basically arise in the context of keeping Dalits in their place within the social hierarchy, mediated by caste and untouchability. Dalits continue to live in extreme poverty in rural areas as well as in urban squatter settlements. Centuries of war against Dalits on all fronts continue even today.

The severity of caste based discrimination related to descent and occupation is at par with racism and apartheid. Existing national legislations to prevent caste based discrimination in India has not been effective due to poor implementation, which itself is a result of lack of political will of the government involved. Despite the various legislations, implementing agencies and monitoring bodies, severe discrimination against Dalits persists. In fact, such discrimination has intensified in recent years as evidenced by the alarming rise in violence, atrocities and massacres against Dalits.

The international community and the UN Bodies have failed to adequately address these major crimes against humanity.

I present this testimony on behalf of Sushila the mother of Surya, a 10-year-old Dalit girl who became the victim of rape in Kerala, India.

### *Testimony*

*On 4 February 2000 at 11.30 a.m. Surya was on her way to school and was crossing the home of Balakrishnapillai - an Upper caste Hindu and 70-year-old retired military officer. He called Surya into his house and asked her to fetch a knife from the kitchen to cut some flowers from the garden. Then he followed her and locked the door. After this he took her into a bedroom and forced her to lie on the bed, and by threatening to kill her and her mother, he finally raped her. Fortunately, during this time Surya lost consciousness and therefore was spared from some of the pain of the brutal act of Balakrishnapillai.*

*Surya recovered consciousness at about 4.00 pm that day and fled from the house of Balakrishna. One neighbour by the name Sivankutty saw her running from Balakrishnapillai's house half-naked and with her hands covering her private parts. She was crying and in an obvious state of distress.*

## Origins of Caste Hierarchies

*Those who eat cock, fish and parrot  
are regarded as low caste.*

*Those who eat beef of that cow whose milk is  
offered  
by the Brahmins to the Shiva are regarded as low.  
How are they low caste?*

*Oh! castes why are you low?  
The darbha grass that the Brahmins eat is licked  
by dogs  
while the cow Madigas eat, is worshipped by  
Brahmins.*

*The Madiga is superior to the Brahmin.  
Willing to buy and use ghee from siddhalike (a  
leather bottle for oil or ghee) and saggale, (a skin  
container to hold water)  
they (the Brahmins) still regard  
Madigas as untouchable.  
The Brahmin fools will go to nayaka naraka (the  
hell of hells!)*

(Vachana of Urilinga Peddigala Punya Stree  
Kalavve)

The vachana cited is by a Dalit woman Kalavve of the 12<sup>th</sup> century belonging to Veerashaivism who questions how castes who are involved in certain types of activities come to be considered as defiling. One can also note the anger that she expresses against the Brahmin castes who have been perpetrating this dominance for many centuries now. Veerashaiva sect, believed to be anti-caste and anti-vedic in origin, is known to have originated as a counter to the Jain ascendancy as well, in Medieval Karnataka. Veerashaivism was in principle open to all castes. Class, gender and kinship distinctions were irrelevant to those who belonged to the community.



There have been innumerable instances in Indian history where the legitimacy of the caste system has been questioned by those who occupy the low rungs in the ladder and who have been subjected to exploitation by the upper castes in the higher rungs. As per the Brahmin model of caste, explained in the *purusha sukta* legend, Brahmins are said to have come from the head of the primeval being, the Kshatriya and Vaishyas from the shoulders and thighs, respectively, and the Sudras from the feet. Having originated in the head, the Brahmins epitomise purity and the Sudras represent the polluting aspect. While the legitimacy accorded to the Brahminical model of caste is almost a part of the common sense, what is generally not as well known is the fact that there are as many such legends or origin tales as there are castes. The Brahmin model based on the *purusha sukta* legend is only one such model, but there are other non-Brahmin models such as those of the Kshatriya, Rajputs, Marathas, Kahars etc. The non-Brahmin models of origin tales or *jati puranas* justify different hierarchies, and the Brahmin is not always on the top. As a matter of fact, there are castes that find the Brahmin defiling.

*Surya's mother, Sushila, on arriving home after 6.00 pm from work, saw urine and blood passing continuously from Surya and that the sheets and Surya's clothes were saturated with blood. Surya told her mother of what had happened, and the next morning on 5 February 2000, Sushila and her sister took Surya to hospital treatment as she was still bleeding and in pain.*

*She was medically examined, but due to the seriousness of the case she was transferred to the emergency ward of Victoria Hospital. At around 8.00 am she was examined by Dr. Varghese. Surya had to undergo an operation to stitch up her vagina. With four stitches given, she was in a constant pain over the following weeks. After ten days in hospital, enduring constant pain, on 14 February 2000, Surya was discharged from hospital. She slowly recovered in a local hospital.*

*In the meantime, Surya's mother went to the local police station (Suranadu) on 5 February 2000 and gave a complaint about the rape of her daughter. The police inspector visited Surya in the hospital and at that time Surya was unconscious. Following this, a case was lodged by the police under section 376 IPC against Balakrishnapillai.*

Though the case was registered against Balakrishnapillai, the police and the Additional Superintendent of Police made inquiry into this case and prevented any action from being taken against him. The reason being that Balakrishnapillai enjoys sufficient wealth and connections as compared to Sushila and the family. This despite Balakrishnapillai being known for molesting young Dalit girls, using his position and status in society.

The question remains whether this case will be consigned to the pile of numerous cases of rapes and violence against women that go unresolved in the country due to the connivance of the police with the powerful upper caste, leaving the present accused free. The mental agony and trauma of a ten-year-old child is being dismissed through the inaction and inability to arrest the accused. Surya has suffered such psychological trauma from the rape that she has blocked out all memories of the incident and now lives in fear of men.

Sexual abuses and other forms of violences are perpetrated against Dalit women and used as tools by landlords and the police to teach **political lessons** and crush any dissent from them. Dalit women are being raped, mutilated and massacred.

The Savarna Liberation Army (**Ranvir Sena**, which is a private army appointed by the higher caste) conducts mass rape campaigns in the State of Bihar, wherein the victims are women ranging from the age of 6 and 70. **Sena** members claim with a macabre sense of glee that the operation is very effective.

The war continues against Dalits and Dalit women. They look forward to an international solidarity to achieve equality, justice and peace.



Way back in 1970, Louis Dumont, a French Social Anthropologist, in his book titled *Homo Hierarchicus*, presented the most powerful and persuasive theory of caste system. Largely deriving from sacredotal Hindu texts, Dumont identifies *hierarchy* as its essential principle. The diversity of castes can be ordered on a scale of hierarchy. Caste practices a contradictory essence, namely the opposition between purity and pollution. Purity implies that Brahmins cannot engage in polluting menial jobs that are set aside for other castes, thus bringing the castes together into a system. What holds different castes together into a whole is the dharma, which assigns to each caste its place thus defining the relationship between *jatis* as the simultaneous unity of mutual separateness and mutual dependence to reproduce itself. Thus, Dumont takes care of the possible conflicts between castes in his theory. The Dumontian view of caste has occupied a dominant position in the analysis of caste.

Under colonialism, caste became the foundational basis of explaining Indian society, serving mainly two kinds of purposes: one, to explain how Indian civilisation survived its history of *despotisms* and *political failures* and two, it also justified the rule of the British. G S Ghurye, an eminent sociologist, was critical of Risley's role in politicising caste, especially in relation to the census. Ghurye complained that the classificatory system adopted by Risley was problematic. In this caste-ridden society a person may offer a bewildering variety of replies depending upon whether he chooses to emphasise his sect, sub-caste, exogamous section, titular designation, occupation, or region. The claim that it was colonialism alone that made India into a caste society is an erroneous one. Perhaps it is important to tell ourselves that caste as a trope to study Indian society was not created out of nothing by the British rule, but it was *consolidated* by the British.



Nevertheless, there have been many studies subsequent to Dumont that in many ways posed a challenge to such an understanding. Many anthropologists have questioned Dumont's claim that the essence of caste lies in continuous hierarchy along which castes can be ordered in terms of relative purity by citing that there has never been one caste ideology but several. The presence of such *multiple hierarchies* is in consonance with the reality where there are varying models of emulation that castes employ for purposes of upward mobility. For instance, the *Chandalas* who are branded by Manu as the lower of mankind, sprung from the illicit intercourse of a Sudra man with a Brahmin woman, whose touch defiles the pure, view themselves differently. According to the tradition of the *Dacca Chandalas*, they were formerly Brahmins who became degraded by eating with Sudras. *Kuricchans* of Malabar plaster their house with cow-dung if it is polluted by the entry of a Brahmin. The individual tales of origin of castes make it possible for those belonging to the *lower* castes not to see themselves intrinsically impure or despicable. The fall from *grace* is always explained by the *lower* castes in terms of lost wars, chance misfortune, and a little carelessness sometimes, or due to deceit.

There is ample evidence in history that the people did not take the low caste status lying down. There have been innumerable caste revolts and attempts towards caste mobility. From the emergence of *Rajput* and *Gujara-Pratihara* kingdoms in medieval India; the *Bhakti* movement that spanned nearly four centuries (9<sup>th</sup> century to 14<sup>th</sup> century) in various parts of the country; the rise of the *Jats* from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, to the assertion of *Izhavas* and the later *Mahars* in the modern period, or even the more recent *Dalit* uprisings and demand for preferential politics, there is evidence to the effect that Brahminical orthodoxy has only few takers. Thus, it is the idea of difference rather than hierarchy, as pointed by Dumont, which is central to castes. For instance, the *Rajput* hierarchy and the Brahmin hierarchy would unanimously place the so-called untouchables at the bottom. The dispute between the Brahmin and the *Rajput* would be about the premier position. In short, the obvious difference between the models is that of power. Discrete character of caste is important because without such an understanding it would be impossible to understand caste conflict, caste politics, and caste mobilisations. It is in fact mechanics of economic and political power that set the rules on the ground.

Sudha Sitaram, Lecturer in Sociology, Bangalore, India.



*Children of war*

*learn*

*to grow up alone*

*and silently*

*hoping*

*no one will notice*

*somebody's life could depend on it*

## **I don't know where I belong**



*Testimony on the Stolen Generations*  
**Maureen Wenzel, Australia**

*Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land I stand on today, the people, their lore and traditions.*

*My name is Maureen Wenzel. I am a descendant of the Bundjalung Aboriginal nation from northern New South Wales Australia. I am privileged to be part of two cultures - my father is a Bundjalung man, and my mother a non-aboriginal Australian. I am currently employed as an Aboriginal Education Assistant in a New South Wales primary school. I am also in my final year of Bachelor of Secondary Teaching Degree at the University of Sydney, majoring in History and Aboriginal Studies.*

*Since the very beginning of European occupation of Australia, indigenous children have been forcibly removed from their families and communities. The impact of enforcement of government policies and the practice of removal has been catastrophic. Every Aboriginal family in Australia today has been affected in some way - either through immediate or extended family experiences.*



## Marks of the Early Colonisers

*The process of colonisation was systematically violent. First was the total appropriation of land like in Australia where the Crown became the holder of the radical title, when with a single stroke common lore was replaced by common law. The law that then became the primary instrument to control and govern entire peoples according to the diktats of the coloniser. A law which took from the indigenous people the right to occupy their traditional land, exposed them to the deprivation of the religious, cultural and economic sustenance which the land provides, vested the land effectively in the control of the imperial authorities without any right to compensation and made the indigenous inhabitants intruders in their own homes and mendicants for a place to live.*

And this law was imposed with a deliberate, planned violence unseen and unheard of in the non-European world - a violence typified by the attitude of William Cox, remembered as a hero in schoolbook history and who is quoted as saying, *The best thing that can be done is to shoot all the blacks and ground manure with their carcasses. That is all the good they are fit for! It is also recommended that all the women and children be shot. That is the most certain way of getting rid of this pestilent race.*

*Generations on, we are still seeing high incidences of drug and alcohol abuse and related problems; mental, physical and general health issues; domestic violence; crime; deaths in custody; low self-worth and self-respect; limited social and academic skills; poor parenting and rejection of Aboriginality.*

*Many of these issues can often be traced directly to forced removal. The loss of parenting skills, particularly for women has been a crucial issue, which has had dramatic consequences on today's Aboriginal children. In my position as Aboriginal Education Assistant, I help students, parents and community to deal with these problems on a daily basis. Past history has created a distrust of government policy and institutions. There are still parents who do not place value on white education. As a result, many Aboriginal children are not encouraged to reach their social or academic potential. Our low ability classes have a high percentage of Aboriginal students with behaviour or learning difficulties.*

*On a personal level, my own family has not escaped the effects of removal. One extended family member was taken from his birth parents simply because he was one of twins. There was no documentation of neglect or mistreatment by his parents. Welfare authorities just thought it was in the best interest of the child. Fostered by a non-aboriginal family in the same town, he was raised and educated according to white culture. During this time, he was never encouraged by his foster parents to connect with his birth family and culture or even acknowledge his Aboriginality.*



*Some years later as a young adult, he eventually had contact with what was left of his natural family. His mother and father had passed away; he was subsequently rejected by his siblings and viewed with suspicion and contempt by his Aboriginal community. His ignorance of cultural practices, language and relationship to family members further distanced him from his people and his land. Looked upon in the wider community as an Aboriginal and in the Aboriginal community as white, he was unable to embrace either culture fully and soon began on the path to self-destruction. He became angry, physically violent, and was unable to form a lasting relationship or hold permanent employment. Drugs and alcohol became a large part of his daily life; he was known to police, had attempted suicide on a number of occasions, and was dependent on welfare payments. Our family has since lost all contact with that man.*

*My own father publicly rejected his Aboriginality, and my siblings and I were raised as white. From a very early age, contact with our Aboriginal family links was completely severed. Our family life was not smooth; my dad had a severe alcohol problem and was a regular perpetrator of domestic violence against my mother. He was always restless, and in those early times, we moved houses a lot. Whether it was because of incidences of racism against him or fear of government welfare policies, I do not know. Eventually our family broke up. My dad has gone back to the bush. He still refuses to speak about our cultural heritage or the past, and he still becomes angry and upset if the word Aboriginal is mentioned in his presence.*

The violence of colonisation has been perpetrated at other levels too - equally unseen and unheard. It deprived people of their own language - by banning it in the schools, by *strapping people* for speaking Maori, it universalised English... and by doing so, the language died, and with it, died a people and their culture.

It then conceived of an even more diabolical plan to breed out the aboriginals. Scientific evidence showed that by the *fourth cross with white stock, signs of aboriginality disappeared*. Therefore, to hasten this process, a policy was put in place of removing all half-and-quarter-caste children from their mothers. They were placed into institutions, taught useful skills and then placed as unpaid children born of white men for their own good, away from their mother's arms and taught to dress and act like white people.

And so was born the stolen generation.

One in ten indigenous children were then forcibly removed from their families and communities between 1910 and 1970. And this breeding out was not always carried out with such violent sophistication. The British soldiers, for example, in Aotearoa arrived on horseback with their guns, slaughtered people, killed all the children and raped the women. And the women still today will not talk about the mixed blood and the way in which that blood became mixed. They are ashamed of it. *We carry the marks today of the early colonisers; the British and the Missionaries.*

And this is a violence of which all traces have been obliterated from white history. But this is a memory that has to be recalled, not so much to relive the pain, but more to understand the changing form of this violence in the modern State that is seemingly liberal, democratic and multicultural; that is seemingly atoning for its violent past - a State in which, in reality, the violence is only getting more subtle and sophisticated.



Witness the *acknowledgement* of this past on the part of the State through the *Australian Reconciliation Convention* or the ERA's (Energy Resources of Australia Ltd.) aboriginal issues policies. Both have sought to *balance between the rights of the indigenous people and the 'developmental' needs of the indigenous and non indigenous communities* by bringing out a reconciliation between the two. Mr. Campbell Anderson, Managing Director, Mineral Council of Australia, Land Access Committee stated at the Australian Reconciliation Commission, *What is required are agreements between indigenous communities and companies with economic development which provide opportunities and benefits for indigenous and non-indigenous interests. In conclusion, the minerals industry has been and must increasingly be a significant factor in pioneering reconciliation.*

Reconciliation for whose benefit is the question that begs to be answered.

In a similar vein, many are questioning the efficacy of revolutionary judicial decisions like the *Mabo judgement* that seek to establish the equal right of indigenous people before the law. However, what still remains is that this *equality before law* comes at the cost of accepting the fundamental inequality established by colonisation and therefore, accepting the legitimacy of an inherently biased framework and institutions of the modern nation-state. The judgement, therefore, *falls well short of recognising the other and conceding equal weight to indigenous law and custom.* It is proposed that a far more revolutionising step, even in this context, would be to rest *radical title* with traditional owners so that all freehold and leasehold title would then be derived from native title.

**Source:** Background note prepared for Nga Wahine Pacifica, Pacific Court of Women organised by Maori Women's Network and AWHRC, Auckland, Aotearoa, September, 1999.

*Being Aboriginal means more than the color of my skin; it is a drive that comes from within. It is a feeling that no words can adequately explain - it sings in me from deep down.... And it is relentless.... I cannot deny it.... I cannot turn it off.... I cannot make it go away.... It is in my every breath.... It is a part of my very existence.*

*I have a burning need to find my Aboriginal connections. With the kind help of some Bundjalung elders who knew my father and his family when they lived on the Aboriginal reserve, I have been able to begin to piece together the jigsaw that is a part of my own personal history. It is a slow and painful process. Each year we are losing our old ones, and they take with them the things the younger generation needs to know. I have visited my father's land and the places I am told were special to him, but I am unable to hear his stories first hand.*

*Aboriginal history is not written - it is an oral history, passed from one generation to the next.... It is an integral part of our cultural education. Effects of politics and practice inflicted upon Aboriginal people since European invasion have filtered down through generations to deny me my birthright - a right to family, a right to learn and understand my culture and heritage, a right to have the lore and sacred secrets of my clan passed down to me by my elders - my mother, my aunts, to hear the traditional songs and the beautiful language, and to learn the special stories of my Bundjalung so that I may in turn pass them to my own grandchildren.*

*I am at a time in my life where I am beginning to move into the role of an elder - a special and important time in an Aboriginal woman's life. It should be a time of much joy ... a time of sharing and teaching those who follow. Instead it is a time of sorrow because I am limited in what I know.*

*Last year, I was tracked down by an old aunty. We stood silently for a long time, looking into each other's eyes, trying to reconnect our spirits after forty years apart. She was my favourite aunt, and in her arms was her daughter. I had cousins, real Aboriginal cousins! During my time in Sydney, my friends always ran into cousins. But in the five years at university, I never found one cousin. Eventually my classmates adopted me so that I could call them cousins.*

*But now I have my own real ones. My father was one of nine children, so aunty and I had a lot of catching up to do. She came to see me every day for a week, bringing old photographs, news of other family members and stories from the past. Though far from completion, my jigsaw is now much bigger. The singing inside me still continues, but it does so at a far gentler pace.*

*When I was asked to speak here today about the Stolen Generations and the impact on Aboriginal families I was reluctant.... I personally was not stolen or removed from my family.... I did not feel that my story would be of value.... I did not feel that my family had been so greatly affected compared to others...until I began to gather the information I needed...until I began to document events in my family....*

*Before coming here, I spoke at length with my younger sister. I asked her how she felt over the years about being separated from her culture and Aboriginal family. Although we work in the same field and conversation usually revolves around Aboriginal issues and events, we had never really spoken about our Aboriginality on a personal level.*



*To my absolute despair, she told me that she had always felt an inexplicable, overwhelming sense of loss and grief and a driving force within that constantly urged her to go back to where I belong, but I don't know where I belong, and there is no one to show me.*

*She left the room, and came back with a worn piece of paper; it contained a poem someone had given her. Through her tears, she began to read:*

*Search for my Aboriginality – Broken Wings*

*I sent my spirit flying away from me  
In search of my family's Aboriginality  
From the foreign mission place where Granny lies  
To find my tribal land and language ties.*

*A journey through time search this once virgin earth  
To find recognition, tribal marks of my people's birth  
Caught up in search of my destination  
Spirit now lost in another world time dimension.*

*I call out my tribal name in dreams at night  
But my ancestors and spirit I cannot sight  
Through dreams, Aboriginal magic and ESP  
But my spirit cannot return to me.*

*I try to reason why my spirit is not coming back  
Because it's me it should be able to backtrack  
My singing, my dreaming, lost these Aboriginal things  
But perhaps my spirit has Broken Wings.*

*I held Jenni as she struggled with her grief... I held her until there were no more tears. My sister and I are fortunate...our healing has begun. There are those who will never be able to heal...those who will never be reunited with family...those who will forever remain dispossessed...those who will never come home...and those who will never have a home to come to.*

*My testimony today is for each and every one of those people and for those generations of Aboriginal children still to come.*

Shame was a legacy given  
to us by white people



### *Testimony on the Marginalisation of Aboriginals*

*My name is Pam Greer.*

*I am Australian Aboriginal.*

*I am a sister, a daughter, a mother and a grandmother.*

*My story is of the fragmentation of indigenous culture, community, family and self.*

*My story is that of the stolen children.*

*Because our country was declared terra nullus or empty land of European settlement, the aboriginal nation has become a non-people in our own country.*

*I remember as a child a lot of sadness around me associated with sickness and death. My grandparents were part of the displaced Aboriginal tribes. Our particular clan was taken to three different locations many miles apart and settled in a very strange and different environment from where they lived. One group was camped in an area in which when a windstorm came, it uncovered human bones. The people were very frightened and said it was a burial site. One person a month died for nine months and the people believed it was punishment for being where they should not be. I found out many years later that they died from tuberculosis. This was one of many of the introduced diseases that had taken many of our people. When I was around four years of age my grandmother became ill, and the health authorities stepped in and moved her many miles away from the family to a sanatorium for T.B. We as a family became isolated again from friends because we were exposed to active T.B. My grandmother died, incidentally younger than I am now. Exactly 13 months later my mother's sister died, at the age of 21. The church in its wisdom stepped in and moved me and my two brothers to institutions again many miles from our remaining family, and to make matters worse they separated me from my brothers.*

*Before I went into the church home I was aware that aboriginal people were not allowed to speak their language in front of the child – punishment would have meant the removal of children.*

*I was just one of the many thousands of children taken from their mothers, and each of us has had our own private and bitter memories and later problems of adjustment. As a child in school I was taught (as all children were) that Aborigines were savages and cannibals, lazy, and dirty, and I felt deep shame.*

*Shame was a legacy given to us by white people and still operates in our lives.*



## Reports on the Colonisation of Aboriginals

Some of the most interesting comments on the moral problems associated with Australian settlement were made by a settler who, in 1826, wrote a report for the London-based Methodist Missionary Society.

New South Wales October 1826

Dear Sir,

*In venturing to state my sentiments respecting the Aborigines of New South Wales, I am sensible that opinions formed during so short a residence must be more or less liable to error so I must, in some respects, betray a want of knowledge, which a more prolonged intercourse with the tribes of natives could alone supply; but, as I know your competency to correct mistakes and to supply deficiencies, I shall merely commit to paper such thoughts as have arisen in my mind during my latest excursion in search of land ... When we look back on the past history of this unhappy race we find nothing to afford us consolation. If to the future, nothing to relieve the fearful foreboding ... as to what will be if some expedient be not adopted to stay the waste of human life, which for now forty years past has been diminishing such of the Aborigines as have been within the bounds of our population. Yes Sir, strange to say, Civilisation has been the scourge of the Natives; Disease, Crime, Misery and Death, have hitherto been the sure attendants of our intercourse with them. Wherever we trace the steps of white population we discover the introduction of evil, the diminution of numbers, the marks of disease, the pressure of want, the physical and moral ruin of this people. If we inquire where are the tribes that once inhabited the places where Sydney, Parramatta, Windsor and other Towns now flourish, what will be the answer? Their existence is but a name. Assemble them and you will find a few miserable creatures, scarcely human in appearance, rise to bear witness that these spots were once peopled by Aborigines.*

*Could we but trace poor individuals' histories, the lingering wretchedness of their conditions, what a tale would it unfold! Sir, it is a sad truth to assert that our prosperity has hitherto been their ruin, our increase their destruction. The history of nearly forty years seals the veracity of this declaration.*

*I had a fairly poor and fragmented education because Aboriginal people were not expected to achieve and so it was an unnecessary thing. I worked on farms and in factories and finally went to the city as an 18-year-old where I started nursing. I was apolitical all of my life, never questioned anything or anyone; after all the years in the clutches of the church, one was taught not to question and not to cry or show emotions.*

*After I married and had three children I was happy that the children were not dark like me; perhaps they would not experience racism and disadvantage as mother and myself had.*

*In 1980 I started working in an Aboriginal organisation, and that was when my education about Aboriginal history really began. I learnt how so many people who were the "stolen generation" were in the mental institutions, had died, had drug and alcohol problems and relationship problems.*

*It wasn't until the early 90s when I began working with women in the area of domestic violence and sexual assault that I realised that Aboriginal women are a very marginalised group and face extreme difficulties everyday.*

*The fact that we Aboriginal people have no land rights is a major source of struggle and is the single focus of our people all over.*

*We are the minority in our own country. We are the least educated and have third world health problems. The majority of us are without our language and culture, and our children are stuck between two cultures - not black enough and too white, wearing Reeboks and caught up in designer clothes and the fast lane. But it is the women who are taking control again, starting to organise and link up with other women's groups.*

*Pam Greer presented her testimony on the Stolen generation at Speaking Tree Womenspeak, the Court of Women on Crimes against Women Related to the Violence of Development, organised by AWHRC and Vimochana, in January 1995 in Bangalore, India.*



*If such be the truth, the ruin of the Aborigines is inevitable, unless some expedient be devised to stay those evils. Tribe after Tribe must successively endure the same measure of sufferings until the total annihilation of the Natives of New Holland winds up the sad catastrophe.*

*Should such a state of things be realised, what will future generations think of our boasted Christianity, of our lauded Philanthropy, when our posterity read in the early page of Australia's history the misery and ruin which marked our adoption of this land when they find recorded that our proprietorship of the soil has been purchased at such a costly sacrifice of human happiness and life.*

*Deeply then are we in arrears to these injured beings at whose expense we live and prosper. Their lands we have converted to our own use; their means of support we have destroyed, Kangaroos, and Opposums, etc. have fled at the noise of the axe, and the busy hum of civilised man. Have such a people then no cause for complaint, no demand on our assistance? Can they not upbraid us with a want of principle, and for the evils we have introduced? Well may they adopt such language as this - Where are our Ancestors? Where is our Food? Where are our Possessions? ... None can defend our conduct towards the New Hollanders upon principle; let us not therefore persist in it, and let them yet receive from our hands some reparation for the wrongs we have done them.*

In a letter to the *Queenslander*, 8 May 1880, a correspondent using the nom de plume *Never-Never* hit out at both the paper and other correspondents who had launched an attack on frontier violence.

*Furthermore, I am what would be called a white murderer, for I have had to disperse and assist to disperse blacks on several occasions ... The question then arises, what lives are we to sacrifice- black or white? Are we to protect the black or protect the white? Shirk it as we will, this is the question. So long as we have country to settle, so long as men have to trust their lives to their own right hands, so long shall we come in contact with the natives, and aggressions and reprisals will take place ... Is there room for both of us here? No. Then the sooner the weaker is wiped out the better, as we may save some valuable lives by the process. If the black fellow is right in murdering white men for invading and taking possession of his country, then every white man, woman, and child who sits at home at ease in our towns and townships is a murderer, for if they had the courage of their opinions they would not stop on in a colony built up on bloodshed and rapine.*

**Source :** "Dispossession: Black Australians and White Invaders"; Henry Reynolds.





*There is in the world a mirror.  
It allows us to know who we are,  
who we were and who we can be.*

*The first image is not always so agreeable,  
the second explains why,  
and with the third we show our promise.*

*The problem is in knowing how to find the mirror.  
It's not so easy.*

*But the really dangerous part  
is to dare oneself to look inside.*

*A little distance from oneself,  
assisted by a smile, will help things.*

Marcos

## **A weaving of voices**



*Testimony to the Indigenous Spirit  
Rosalinda Santiz Diaz, Chiapas, Mexico*

*To the women in the world.  
To the women in this meeting.  
To the International Organisations of Human Rights.*

*I am greeting with respect and solidarity all the women in this meeting. My name is Rosalinda Santiz Diaz. I am an indigenous tzotzil, from the community Bayalemo, municipality San Andres Sakam' Chen de los Pobres, from the highland region of Chiapas. I am the President of a women's cooperative called **Jolom Mayaetik- Mayan Weavers**, in English.*

*In Chiapas and all over Mexico, the indigenous people have been exploited and oppressed for the last 508 years. We are not taken into account, we are not recognised. There is no good education for us, and the health services are insufficient and bad. A lot of women die of curable diseases or giving birth. Not all of our communities enjoy drinking water or electricity. We are not paid a good price for our work. For women, there are very few possibilities: you get married and have children or you work in the domestic service in the cities, which is very low paid. In the cities, our clothes and language are despised; that's why some indigenous people lose their clothing and feel ashamed when they speak their language.*

*That's why in January 1994 the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) started an armed uprising. Some parts of the civil society joined in the fight for our rights and indigenous culture. In these movements, thousands of women and men crossed different places of Mexico to make a weaving of voices, thoughts, fights and protests to reconstruct our dignity.*

*Since 1994, young indigenous women have been fighting so that our words are heard and that we follow our hearts and thoughts. During these years, a lot of us have suffered persecution from militarisation and paramilitary groups, from hunger, death threats, sexual violations, and forced displacements as consequences of the so called Low Intensity Warfare.*

*More than 20,000 indigenous people have lost their bits of land, their homes and working tools. A lot of people were killed. For example, on 22 December 1997, paramilitary groups killed 45 indigenous people, most of them women and children.*

*In my organisation we also suffered repression because we never limited ourselves to the production and commercialisation of craftworks. When we were participating in demonstrations and meetings, promoting the social and political participation of women, we received death threats, and on two occasions they came into our shop and took away craftwork and information. The repression took us to the division of our first organisation.*

## **Chiapas: The Southeast in Two Winds - A Storm and a Prophecy**

### *The First Wind: The One From Above*

Once upon a time there was a viceroy made of chocolate with a peanut for a nose. The viceroy's apprentice, Governor Patrocinio Gonzá'lez Garrido, in the manner of the old monarchs who were put in power by the Spanish crown during the Conquest, has re-organised the geography of Chiapas. The assignment of spaces to the urban and rural categories is a somewhat sophisticated exercise of power but when directed by Mr. Gonzá'lez Garrido's denseness, it has reached exquisite levels of stupidity. The viceroy decided that cities with services and benefits should be for those who already have everything. And he decided, the viceroy that is, that the masses are fine out in the open, exposed to wind and rough weather, and that they only deserve space in the jails, which never cease to be uncomfortable. Because of this, the viceroy decided to construct jails in the outskirts of the cities so that the proximity of the undesirable and delinquent masses would not disturb the rich.

Jails and Army barracks are the principal works promoted by this governor in Chiapas. His friendship with ranchers and powerful businessmen is a secret to no one. Neither is his animosity for the three dioceses which regulate the state's Catholic life. The Diocese of San Cristo'bal, headed by Bishop Samuel Ruiz, is a constant menace to Gonzá'lez Garrido's reorganizing project. Hoping to modernise the absurd system of exploitation and extraction which prevails in Chiapas, Patrocinio Gonzá'lez comes up against the stubbornness of religious and secular figures who support and preach Catholicism's option for the poor.



With the hypocritical applause of Aguirre Franco, the Bishop of Tuxtla Gutierrez, and the mute approval of the Bishop of Tapachula, Gonz lez Garrido sustains and gives new life to the *heroic* conspiracies of ranchers and businessmen against the members of the Diocese of San Cristo bal. *Don Samuel's teams*, as they are called by some, are not made up of inexperienced believers: Before Patrocinio Gonz lez Garrido had even dreamed of being state governor, the Diocese of San Cristo bal de las Casas preached the right to freedom and justice. For one of the country's most backward bourgeoisie, the agricultural bourgeoisie, this could only mean one thing: rebellion. These rancher and business *patriots* and *believers* know how to prevent rebellion: the existence of privately financed, armed paramilitary groups trained by members of the Federal Army, Public Security police and state law is well known by the *campesinos* who suffer from their threats, torture and gunshots.

A few months ago, Father Joel Padro n from the parish of Simojovel was arrested. Accused by the region's ranchers of initiating and taking part in land take-overs, Father Joel was arrested by state authorities and held in the Cerro Hueco Jail in the state capital. The mobilisation of the members of the Diocese of San Cristo bal (those of Tuxtla Gutierrez and Tapachula were conspicuous in their absence) and a federal compromise succeeded in obtaining the parish priest Padro n's freedom.

While thousands of *campesinos* marched in Tuxtla Gutierrez to demand Padro n's freedom, ranchers in Ocosingo sent their paramilitary forces to clear out property-owning *campesinos*. Four hundred men, armed by the ranchers, destroyed and burned houses, beat Indigenous women and murdered a *campesino*, Juan, by shooting him in the face. After the expulsion, the paramilitary forces-composed mostly of workers from local ranches and small-property owners proud of partaking in raids with the young ranchers-drove along the region's roads in pickup trucks provided by their masters. Ostentatiously displaying their arms, drunk and intoxicated, they shouted: *Ranchers are number one!* and warned everyone that it was only the beginning. Undaunted, municipal authorities in Ocosingo and soldiers stationed in the region looked passively on the gunmen's triumphant parade.

*Today, I am not living in my community, where women daily have to live with fear. Their lives are not the same as before the arrival of the militaries and the creation of paramilitary groups. Now I am living in San Cristobal. That has not been easy either, because it is another way of living and when I came, I hardly spoke Spanish. In my community, they spoke in a bad manner because of the different traditions. For example, in my community, I am not allowed to walk alone, laugh, or talk to a man alone, among other things. When I walk alone in the city, people of my community say that I am only looking for a husband.*

*While I have been participating in the fight of Civil Society, I have received letters with death threats, anonymous phone calls, and been shouted at in the streets. On two occasions I was attacked physically while walking with a friend. They accused us of being Zapatista.*

*Nevertheless, we move forward. We want to learn new things, we go on organising ourselves. We demand that indigenous rights and our rights as women are respected.*

*We want a serious revision of indigenous customs and traditions in our country so that they don't harm our hearts, our bodies and our thoughts as indigenous women.*



*We demand the right to own land, to have a good education, a good health service and housing with dignity. We want our languages (there are more than 50 of them in Mexico), to be respected; we demand a good price for our work; we don't want to be forced into marriage; and we want to decide the number of children we have. We demand the right to participate in decisions and in communal and municipal assemblies, and the right to take responsibilities as part of the authorities. We demand a life with justice and dignity without any violence.*

*We want to have a future where today's thoughts are a reality - that is why we are in the process of building our autonomy. We decide what we want - from naming our local governments by indigenous tradition so that they represent the people's voice, to having our own legislation. We want the rights to be known by everybody because often we don't know them. And we want to decide what education to give to our children.*

*Today, I am happy to be in this country, though I am far from my own country, because I see and feel the other women fighting and suffering the consequences of the wars which hurt us so very much as women. It is necessary to join our voices and to recover the strength of our hearts.*

*Receive a warm greeting from all indigenous women who are fighting in Mexico for a life with justice and dignity. Most of us are weavers and today we give you the colours of our work to join your dances, songs, and fights and reclaim a better life.*

*Thank you.*

*Long live all fighting women!  
Viva las mujeres en lucha*



In Tuxtla Gutierrez, almost 10,000 *campesinos* marched in favor of Father Padro'n's release. In a corner of Ocosingo, Juan's widow buried her husband, victim of the proud ranchers. There was no march or protest petition for Juan's death. *This is Chiapas.*

....in Chiapas 14,500 people die every year, the highest mortality rate in the country. The causes? Curable diseases such as respiratory infections, enteritis, parasites, amoebas, malaria, salmonella, scabies, dengue, pulmonary tuberculosis, trachoma, typhus, cholera and measles. Many say that the figure is actually over 15,000 because deaths in marginalised zones, the majority of the state, are not reported... During Patrocinio Gonz lez Garrido's four-year term more than 60,000 Chiapanecos have died, most of them poor. The war against the people, directed by the viceroy and commanded by the feudal lords, consists of methods more subtle than bombardments. There is no mention in the press of this murderous plot which costs lives and land as in the days of the Conquest.

The Committee for Citizen Defense continues to carry out its proselytizing work, holding meetings to convince the rich and poor of the city of Ocosingo that they should organise and arm themselves so that the *campesinos* won't enter the city because they will destroy everything, without respecting the rich or the poor.

*The viceroy smiles with approval.*

\*\*\*\*\*

The viceroy is worried. The *campesinos* refuse to applaud the institutional pillage written into the new Article 27 of the Constitution. The viceroy is enraged. The poor aren't happy with being exploited. They refuse to humbly accept the charity that Pronasol spreads around the Chiapaneco countryside. The viceroy is desperate. He consults his advisors. His advisors tell him an old truth: Jails and military bases aren't enough to ensure continued domination. It is also necessary to control people's thoughts. The viceroy is disturbed. He paces his palace. *Then he stops and smiles.*



## XEOCH: Rap and lies for the campesinos.

In Ocosingo and Palenque, Cancun and Chilo'n, Altamirano and Yajalo'n, the Indigenous people are celebrating. A new gift from the supreme government has made life a little happier for the peons, small landowners, landless *campesinos* and impoverished inhabitants of the ejidos. They have been given a local radio station that reaches the most isolated corners of eastern Chiapas. The station's programming is fitting: Marimbas and rap music proclaim the good news. The Chiapaneco countryside is being modernized. XEOCH transmits from the township of Ocosingo and can be found at 600 Mhz AM from four in the morning till 10 at night. Its news shows abound with lies. They tell of the "disorientation" that "subversive" lay-workers spread among the peasantry, the abundance of aid credits that are never received by the Indigenous communities, and the existence of public works that have never been built. The viceroy is also given time on the air so that he can remind the population with threats that not all is lies and rap music; there are also jails and military bases and a penal code which is the most repressive in the Republic. The penal code punishes any expression of discontent. The laws against demonstrations, rebellion, inciting to riot, etc., demonstrate that the viceroy is careful to maintain everything in order.

....Not everyone hears the voices of hopelessness and conformity. Not everyone is carried away by hopelessness. There are millions of people who continue on without hearing the voices of the powerful and the indifferent. They can't hear; they are deafened by the crying and blood that death and poverty are shouting in their ears. But, when there is a moment of rest, they hear another voice. They don't hear the voice that comes from above; *they hear the voice that is carried to them by the wind from below, a voice that is born in the Indigenous heart of the mountains. This voice speaks to them about justice and freedom*, it speaks to them about socialism, about hope...the

only hope that exists in the world. The oldest of the old in the Indigenous communities say that there once was a man named Zapata who rose up with his people and sang out, *Land and Freedom!* These old *campesinos* say that Zapata didn't die, that he must return. These old *campesinos* also say that the wind and the rain and the sun tell the *campesinos* when to cultivate the land, when to plant and when to harvest. They say that hope is also planted and harvested. They also say that the wind and the rain and the sun are now saying something different: that with so much poverty, the time has come to harvest rebellion instead of death. That is what the old *campesinos* say. The powerful don't hear; they can't hear, they are deafened by the brutality that the Empire shouts in their ears. "*Zapata*," insists the wind, the wind from below, our wind.

*This wind will come from the mountains. It is already being born under the trees and is conspiring for a new world, so new that it is barely an intuition in the collective heart that inspires it...*

## *The Second Wind: The Wind From Below*

This chapter tells how dignity and defiance joined hands in the Southeast, and how Jacinto Pe'rez's phantoms run through the Chiapaneco highlands. It also tells of a patience that has run out and of other happenings that have been ignored but have major consequences.

These people were born dignified and rebellious, brothers and sisters to the rest of Mexico's exploited people. They are not just the product of the Annexation Act of 1824, but of a long chain of ignominious acts and rebellions. From the time when cassock and armor conquered this land, dignity and defiance have lived and spread under these rains.

Collective work, democratic thinking, and subjection to the decisions of the majority are more than just traditions in Indigenous zones. They have been the only means of survival, resistance, dignity, and defiance. These "*evil ideas*," as they are seen by landholders and businessmen, go against the capitalist precept of "*a lot in the hands of a few*."

It has mistakenly been said that the Chiapas rebellion has no counterpart, that it is outside the national experience. This is a lie. The exploited Chiapaneco's specialty is the same as that of exploited people from Durango, Veracruz, or the plateau of northern Mexico: to fight and to lose. If the voices of those who write history speak excessively, it is because the voice of the oppressed does not speak...yet. There is no historic, national, or regional calendar that has documented each and every rebellion against this system that is imposed and maintained with blood and fire throughout the national territory. In Chiapas, this rebel voice is only heard when it shakes the world of the landowners and businesspeople. Indeed, the phantom of Indigenous barbarism strikes government-building walls and gains access with the help of revolution, trickery, and threats. If the rebellion in the Southeast loses, as the rebellions lost in the North, Center, and West, it is not the result of bad timing, it is because wind is the fruit of the land; it comes in time and ripens in the breasts of those who have nothing but dignity and rebelliousness. And this wind from below, that of rebellion and dignity, is not just an answer to the wind from above. It is not just an angry response or the destruction of an unjust and arbitrary system. Rather it carries with it a new proposal, a hope of converting rebellion and dignity into freedom and dignity.

How will this new voice make itself heard in these lands and across the country? How will this hidden wind blow, this wind which now blows only in the mountains and canyons without yet descending to the valleys where money rules and lies govern?

*This wind will come from the mountains. It is already being born under the trees and is conspiring for a new world, so new that it is barely an intuition in the collective heart that inspires it...*

Extracts from an essay by Insurgent Subcommander Marcos of the Zapatista National Liberation Army that was written in August of 1992 and released publicly in January 1994.



Today  
we leave our rooms and walk the corridors  
fearing that  
nobody  
will find us

Jerzy Jarniewicz  
Poland

## A minority in the world



*Testimony on being a Refugee in Europe*  
**Ayan Mahmoud, Somalia**

*I've been asked to share my experiences of being a refugee in Europe. I arrived at the age of 14. At such a young age I was not so much aware of what was going on around me in terms of justice.*

*I had to learn the Dutch language, and soon I became a translator for older women. That was the point where my awareness started. Many experiences were shared. I met lots of women who travelled through Africa (such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda). They told me similar experiences of rape and inhuman treatments, things happening while they were at the refugee camps. The majority of women found it very hard to tell their stories. I share with you the one that impressed me most.*

*Her name is Sara and she is 30 years old now.*

*She lived in Mogadishu, the capital of what used to be Somalia when the war began. Sara witnessed the beheading of her uncle. After being plundered, a grenade was thrown into their house. She tried to escape through the hole where the grenade had hit the wall. The men followed her while they shot at her. They didn't want to kill her; it would have spoiled the opportunity to rape her. You can finish the story yourself...some have survived, others didn't. Luckily, Sara did survive.*

*Some women like Sara end up in other countries as refugees. They have to deal with time-consuming procedures. To begin with, they need to prove they are refugees. This can easily take four to five years.*

## Poverty Goes Global

*Globalisation is the macro-economic condition within which poverty flourishes. Uncritical worship of free markets - free, of course, only to those rich enough to benefit from them - the relentless demand for modernisation in production, and the facilitation of the power of TNCs (trans-national corporations), which already control 70% of the world's trade, all conspire to render the poor yet more powerless.*

Examples are legion and we need only consider one, the destruction of nomadic pastorals throughout the Greater Horn of Africa. The final collapse by the Somalian State followed an extensive and bloody campaign by its military ruler, Siad Barre, which among other things had the sequestration of productive farmland as its object. Sedentary farmers, holding land by ancient customary laws and nomadic pastoralists, with whom they had co-existed relatively peacefully, were driven from their land and ranges to make way for plantations controlled by Barre's satraps. These plantations were devoted to the production of crops designed for the international food commodity trade, were environmentally destructive of extremely fragile ecosystems and were financed by international capital. Farmers and pastoralists became refugees and died in appalling numbers in the disasters of 1991-93. That disaster continues, like so many other chronic disasters, and is related to others in the Greater Horn.

In Kenya, President Daniel Arap Moi's continued assault on the Kikuyu, together with his well-known attacks on the vast numbers of refugees along the Somali border, includes similar objectives. The process, aptly described by the campaigning researchers of African Rights as *land-looting* (they coined the terms for Somalia), is part of an overall attempt to incorporate Kenyan agriculture into the world market. Since Kenya, unlike Somalia, still has a government of sorts, it is backed heavily in this programme by the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Similar ambitions drive the racist government of Sudan in its genocidal wars against the Nubians in the South.

**Source:** "Poverty Goes Global",  
Index on Censorship, 3/1998  
Neil Middleton

*There is discrimination against blacks as well as women. Once they have found the courage to tell their experiences they often are not taken seriously. So, their problems are not seen as problems. Too many times rape is regarded as part of the African culture.*

*Afghanistan and Iranian women as well are being told that wearing the chador is a part of their culture and therefore not a reason to be a refugee. Governments are looking for reasons to send these people back to where they come from.*

*The Dutch government tells widows from Somalia that they can return to Somalia and that the brother of the husband who died will take care of them by marrying these women.*

*In the Netherlands there is a discussion taking place regarding the refugee children who are on their own, for whatever reason. The contents of this discussion are that African children mature faster than European children. In other words: we can send them back and they will take care of themselves.*

*In fact, we are not talking about being a refugee in Europe. The bottom line is being a minority in the world.*

*The question that countries should ask themselves is: do we fully want to embrace minorities in our society? Being a part of our own society, do we want to protect them as well as fight for them? If the answer to this question is yes then we can reach a higher level where countries can hold each other responsible for providing safety for their own minorities.*

*By holding each other responsible it will hopefully be avoided that refugees are forced to flee from one country to another to gain the basic human right to feel safe.*

*Hopefully it will be avoided that refugees are told that their problems are not a real problems.*



## Refugees

### The Modern Political Condition

..... *A* great deal of the controversy concerning the movement of people is focused on the definition of a refugee, and in this regard there are two basic principles that have governed the treatment of refugees in international agreements: first, the definition of a refugee has been established on a very narrow basis; and second, the case for refugee status has been limited to individuals rather than groups. But as all of these examples also demonstrate, in practice both of these conditions have been manipulated in accordance with specific state interests in particular contexts.

The principal document governing the definition and treatment of refugees is the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees together with the 1967 Protocol, which expanded the Convention by removing limitations on time and geography. The Convention defined a refugee as follows:

The term *refugee* shall apply to any person who...owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political option, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; of who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

The Convention was originally intended to apply to émigrés from Soviet-imposed governments in central and eastern Europe, and the USSR and its subject allies never accepted the Convention or the Protocol. Western governments were therefore within the bounds of an international pact in refusing to repatriate immigrants from the East, and the Soviet bloc continued to emphasise its right to control the emigration of its subjects.

During the Cold War, Washington routinely accepted claims to refugee status from persons fleeing westward, thereby dispensing in practice with the individual case oriented definition of the Convention. .... In addition, while the Convention's language makes it possible to exclude from the safety net of refugee status those who flee a country because of intolerable economic conditions, during the Cold War, Western governments chose to relax this restriction because the economic conditions prevalent in the East were thought to be politically generated. Because collectivised, command economies were imposed by so-called totalitarian governments, lack of economic opportunity could be interpreted as a political problem. By contrast, would-be refugees from Third World countries who are deemed to be escaping economic deprivation are rejected, which is a reflection of the view that market economies are natural, not political, arrangements.

*And although some states do have a history favoring the granting of asylum, they insist that such acts are at the discretion of the state and not a matter of an individual's right to asylum*

The 1951 Convention therefore lays down general guidelines, but the interpretation of those guidelines remains the prerogative of individual states because there is no authoritative sanctioning body to impose a particular interpretation of the language of the Convention. At the same time, although more than one hundred governments have signed these agreements, which prevent the return of what are interpreted to be legitimate refugees, the UN has been unable to broker a similar agreement to guarantee the right to asylum. The reason for this failure is clear: immigration policy, which is entailed in the question of asylum, is considered to be sacrosanct to the maintenance of state sovereignty. All states treat absolute control of territory as an essential element of the claim to sovereignty, so although governments are willing to consider agreements setting out the normative terms for the treatment of persons fleeing the jurisdiction of other states, few are willing to consider norms that would compromise their own territorial control. And although some states do have a history favoring the granting of asylum, they insist that such acts are at the discretion of the state and not a matter of an individual's right to asylum.



*Among the forces at work  
in modernity that act to  
uproot us are two principal  
ones: the market economy  
and the nation-state*

*The problem of refugees, their identity, and their fate is thus a complicated problem that has the question of sovereignty at its core. By reflecting on this problem, we can perhaps gain some insight into the nature of the sovereign power of nation-states today.*

In many respects, the twentieth century has been the century of the refugee. Previously, migration had been fairly unregulated. Before the beginning of this century, those who sought refuge from political persecution tended to be not *refugees* but *exiles*. In the early and middle nineteenth century, such figures as Alexander Herzen, Karl Marx, or Guiseppe Mazzini represented the archetype of individuals who had chosen their place of refuge because of their political activity and who were of little concern to their host countries. By the end of the century, however, they were joined by others who were not destined to become famous: those who were displaced by the German wars of unification, Jews escaping the pogroms of Czarist Russia, and Armenians fleeing the massacre perpetrated upon them by the Ottomans. Later still, the Balkan wars produced a constant flow of people sent on the move by religious, ethnic, linguistic, and national struggles. With the turmoil of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the dissolution of the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires, the number of people who had become refugees in the accompanying process of new-state formation had grown precipitously. The peace treaties that followed the war deployed two terms – one German and one French – to designate these refugees. The French word was *apatrides*, or stateless; the German word was *Heimatlosen*, or homeless.

That these two terms could be taken to be synonymous is instructive and helps us to understand Hannah Arendt's assertion that stateless person forms *the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics*. The notion that one's state is equivalent to one's home is not etymologically obvious. *Heimat* connotes both home and a native place. It is related to the English word *hamlet* and survives in the English suffix *ham*, as in Nottingham or Birmingham. In fact, in its earliest, fourteenth-century usage, the word *home* originally referred to a native place in the form of a collection of houses, or a village. In other words, to be *heimatlose*, or homeless, could signify to be without a native place, understood to be a community. That this community should be conceptualised as a state tells us great deal about the social and political situation that forms the general background to the emergence of refugees as a modern phenomenon.

The political upheavals that generated the movement of peoples at the beginning of this century were phenomena associated with the consolidation not of states but of nation-states. That is, the modern state, with a few important exceptions, is an association that claims not only territorial integrity but also a specific national identity. The process of national state formation in Europe prior to this century had consisted mostly of assimilation rather than expulsion, as in the formation of British or French national identity. However, in central, eastern, and southeastern Europe, in the Caucasus and Asia Minor, where nation-states were formed out of the breakup of far-flung empires, the process of nation-state formation took the form of exclusion and expulsion.

In the examples of the population exchanges between Greece and Turkey, the transfers entailed in the partition of India and Pakistan, and the less legalistic transfer of populations in Croatia and Bosnia today, the conflation of notions of state and home becomes more clearly discernable. *By the logic of the nation-state, people must leave their homes in order to come home; they must sever their connection with whatever other community or communities to which they belong in order to become members of the only community that counts – the nation with its own state. In these examples, that severance and that joining entail physical upheaval and resettlement. The home is exchanged for the homeland, which exists as an imagined necessity rather than as a lived or historical contingency.*

For those who find themselves excluded from the national identity amidst which they live, this exclusion is a perilous one because homelessness is the constant threat, no matter how long they or their ancestors have been resident in a particular bit of geography. In Europe, Jews and Gypsies have represented peoples with homes but no homeland. It is in this sense that Karl Jaspers and Hannah Arendt, in an exchange of letters, agreed that the Zionist movement, which aimed to establish Palestine as a Jewish nation-state, represented the true assimilation of the Jews – the end of their *chosen* self-identity and transformation into a national people like any other. For the Gypsies, assimilation into the world of nations appears to be impossible – they are perpetual refugees.



The problem of refugees in our time  
 is a symptom of the uprootedness or  
 homelessness  
 of the modern age. It is a  
 phenomenon of the era of nation-  
 states and of the international  
 political economy, and it is a  
 problem not insofar as the refugee is  
 denied a home-land but insofar as he  
 or she is denied the possibility of  
 establishing a home

Although the examples given so far have all involved physical displacement, the idea that the modern nation-state requires the loss of a home in order to find one in the homeland is an all-encompassing one and includes instances where no physical change of location occurs. This movement, which is characteristic of the formation of national identity through assimilation in Western Europe and to which I referred above, is part of the general phenomenon of modernity that Simone Weil called *uprootedness*. Among the forces at work in modernity that act to uproot us are two principal ones: the market economy and the nation-state. The first of these Weil interprets in terms reminiscent of Marx's analyses of

estrangement and of the reification of commodities. In many of her writings, Weil pays particular attention to the effects of unemployment on the lives of the working class, but she is also attentive to the general effects of monetised social relations upon culture in general. The emphasis here is on inducements to short-term interests, which has the cultural effect that *each thing is looked upon as an end in itself*. *Uprootedness*, she concludes, *breeds idolatry*.

*Idolatry* is also the temptation presented by the nation-state. In her interpretation of French history in *The Need for Roots*, Weil rehearses the manner in which the process of nation-building over a period extending from the thirteenth century through the French Revolution gradually supplanted complex, fragmented, sometimes overlapping local identities in favor of a single, undifferentiated national identity. This is a history of struggle, of conquest and assimilation of Corsicans, Bretons, Burgundians, Basques, Alsatians, and so on. It culminated in the doctrine of the sovereign nation of 1789, a doctrine that paradoxically predicated national identity upon a radical break with one past. The result, Weil claims, is *that the nation-state, having supplanted all other communities, stands alone as the loveless object of devotion*.

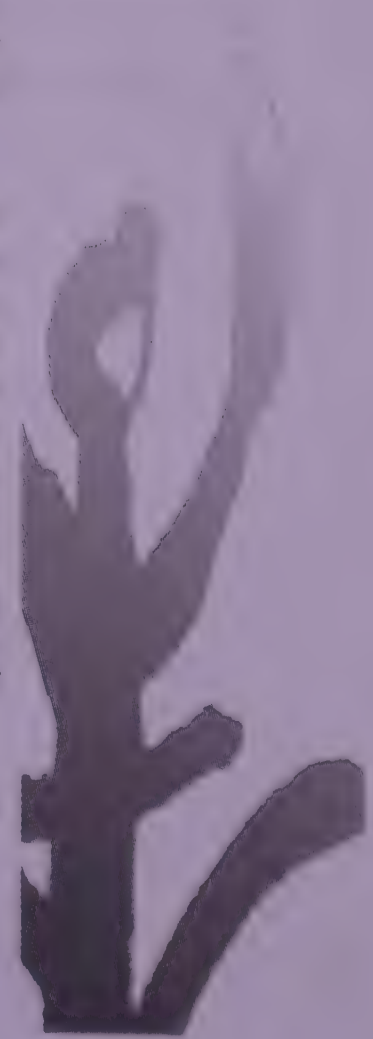
Hannah Arendt in her discussion of the condition of refugees at the end of World War II, of stateless people who were without the protection of a state-guaranteed rights, Arendt wrote:

The first loss which the rightless suffered was the loss of their homes, and this meant the loss of the entire social texture into which they were born and in which they established for themselves a distinct place in the world. This calamity is far from unprecedented; in the long memory of history, forced migrations of individuals or whole groups of people for political or economic reasons look like everyday occurrences. What is unprecedented is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one. Suddenly, there was no place on earth where migrants could go without the severest restrictions, no country where they would be assimilated, no territory where they could found a new community of their own. This, moreover, had next to nothing to do with any material problem of overpopulation; it was a problem not of space but of political organisation.

What is important to Arendt in her understanding of what it means to be homeless is not the loss of a particular place but of the possibility of being at home anywhere. And home here signifies a place in the world insofar as such a place makes acting in the world possible; that is, makes action meaningful through shared understandings and a shared interpretation of action. More clearly than Weil's organic *roots*, Arendt's conception of home is to be distinguished from what I earlier referred to as the homeland because it is something explicitly made, the product and precondition of political life. It is, I think, something that retains its character even as its concrete manifestations are mobile. Homelands are places that are unchanging and to which one must return, no matter how hostile they may be to the returnee. Homes can be made and remade, if there is space for them.

As Arendt indicated, that space is not really geographical but rather political. *The problem of refugees in our time is a symptom of the uprootedness or homelessness of the modern age. It is a phenomenon of the era of nation-states and of the international political economy, and it is a problem not insofar as the refugee is denied a home-land but insofar as he or she is denied the possibility of establishing a home.* The system of nation-states systematically denies that possibility through its insistence upon the principle of sovereignty and the state's hegemony over questions of identity. The principles of human rights, by contrast, are meant to create that space and that possibility, but as long as those rights are interpreted and enforced by nation-states, there will be no uncontrolled space. Refugees thus represent the contemporary political identity crisis. In their homelessness as statelessness they are the often unwitting representatives of a cosmopolitan alternative to the idea of a homeland. Such an ideal can be seen as unrealisable or recognised as the site for a struggle against the reductionism of national identity and for the making of a home.

Extracted from the article by Nicholas Xenos, originally presented at the thirty-fourth annual convention of the International Studies Association in Acapulco, Mexico, in March 1993.





*I sometimes wonder what is worse  
A secret or a lie  
a word unspoken or left unsaid  
when either way a man, a woman, is dead*

*I still maintain  
It is not death that is important  
But the manner of dying  
like a child's first poem  
wiped by a careless eraser*

No mother should give  
herself to despair



*Testimony of a Mother in Exile  
Mejra Dautovic, Bosnia*

*This is a true story*

*Respected readers, when you read or listen to this, be strong as I have been. I am a mother who, together with her sick husband Uzeir, survived all horrors of this war. My name is Dautovic Mejra, called the Mother. This name was given to me by the co-citizens of the town, Bosanski Petrovac, which I have lived in since 1995, when the aggressors exiled me from my home and from my beautiful town of Prijedor. I was born in Brcko and moved to Prijedor after I was married. Before that, I lived in Brcko for six years with my husband - from 1964, which is when we got married, till 1970 when we moved to Prijedor. My husband, Dautovic Uzeir, was born in Prijedor in 1939, and our children were born in Brcko. My son Edwin was born in 1965, and he graduated from a high school in Prijedor as an electric technician. Afterward, he worked together with his father in an independent locksmith's trade shop. My daughter Edna was born in 1969 in Brcko, and she graduated from a high school. In Tuzla she gave exams for trade school. After she graduated from there, her father opened an independent trades shop where she worked for a year.*



In 1990, she enrolled into Academy for Pedagogy in Tuzla. When the war broke out she was second year into her studies. She returned to Prijedor in April 1992 where, with her brother and 200 other young men, she became active with the Patriot's League, which aims to protect the non-Serb population. I begged Edwin and Edna to somehow leave this hurricane of war as the last buses were leaving. **But they refused to leave.** When the last bus was leaving from Prijedor for Banja Luka, from where there were flights for Serbia, I begged that at least Edna would leave so she could stay alive, but she said, **Mom, where my brother goes I go. You cannot stay here to watch me when Chetniks would rape and slaughter me.** On 30 April 1992, she went into town with her friend. At 8 p.m. Helena said they should go home. It was strange for Edna to go home so early, but she did not dream of what was to happen. That same night, Chetniks took siege of Prijedor and took over all significant places where they placed their snipers. The town was under power of Chetniks and SDS (Serbian Democratic Party). All respectful non-Serb citizens, intellectuals and doctors of Prijedor were taken into camps of death: Omarska, Trnopolje, Keraterm, as well as Ljubija. Many of them were killed immediately, and others were tortured in the most cruel of ways.

The party SDA (Serbian Party of Democratic Action) won in April of 1992; a year later SDS took over in the most brutal way and created concentration camps for non-Serb population. Dear readers, when Bosnia was literally in flames (April 1993), in Prijedor we had oasis of peace. We never thought for a second that our neighbours and friends would kill us. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May, the Hambarine part of the city was destroyed, killing and exiling people. Two hundred of our young men were trying to help, but how could they go against the fourth strongest force in Europe with all its arms? Our youth were without any weapons, and the Chetniks were equipped with tanks and airplanes full of arms. I found myself in the village of Corakovo on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May, when the area of Hambarine was shelled. I found myself fleeing with several thousand others, many of whom were carrying food for the children and cigarettes. After they shelled Hambarine on that day, Chetniks went for cleansing of those areas. We thought they were searching the houses, but they were killing everything alive that happened to be before them.

## The Enemy Inside: The Western Involvement with Bosnia and Problem of Securing Identities

To be sure, Bosnia has become a signifier for all sorts of things, from the return of the Middle Ages to Europe, to the failure of the West and the return of geopolitics. This multitude of representation certainly accounts for much of the ambivalence around the name itself. In the context of this essay, Bosnia represents an ambivalent identity by virtue of being a *stranger* in the geographical space of the West. What I am referring to here is the fact that Bosnian identity contains both Western and Islamic elements; that Bosnia is, if we accept the dominant way of categorisation in the West, a contradiction in terms: *a Muslim people in a Westernised civilisational space*, a religious entity in a purportedly secularised political space. Above all, it represents the enemy inside. As an Islamic entity, it belongs to a geocultural space of which the anti-Western identity has now been established in a combined effort of Western strategic specialists, statesmen and diplomats; as a part of the former Yugoslavia and a victim of the *anti modern* Serb aggressions, it belongs within the cultural political space of the West. To complicate matters further, the West is supporting Bosnia in its struggle for survival against Serbian (and Croatian) forces that legitimise their antagonistic stance toward Bosnia by reference to the anti-Western, anti-civilisation nature of Islamic culture.

In a historical perspective, the nationalisation of Bosnian identities is a rather recent phenomenon, dating to the second part of the nineteenth century, when Bosnian Orthodox Christians began to associate themselves with Serbia and Catholics with Croatia. As John Fine observes, *the terms Serb and Croat had no earlier relevance to the area's population. The terms were meaningless for Bosnia until Bosnians - as they unfortunately did - began to take on and feel such entities in the nineteenth century.*



The ramifications of this nationalisation of Bosnian identities became prominent in the 1990s. Deprived of a similar ethnocultural connection to territory, the Muslims in Bosnia faced accusations of not being a proper nation, and thus not having the right to statehood. Defined as converted Croats or Serbs, respectively, the nationalisation of Bosnian identities was translated into the nationalisation of Bosnian territory. Given that, being Bosnian could no longer refer to the historical and cultural experiences of all three peoples *living on common territory where the different sources of people's identities were acknowledged and even emphasised*, the recent attempts to reserve *Bosnian* for the Muslim part of the population must be understood as an attempt by the Muslim government to level the field with the other actors by *nationalising* what was previously a culture based on shared confessional and cultural practices and experiences.

It is this move that establishes an expressly Muslim entity in Europe, and it defies traditional Western politics of identity through its ambiguity. This is not to say that the Muslims in Bosnia had to be discovered or came into existence through this move. But much of the dominant Western discourse on Islam and Muslim culture externalised it as a constitutive order, against which a coherent and usually superior identity of the West is ascertained. The Muslims living inside of Europe have for the most part been silenced by this discourse.

Therefore, articulation of a distinctive Bosnian identity as Muslim constitutes something of an anomaly for Western institutions. The timing could not have been worse. Just when *Islamic fundamentalism* has been established as the new danger to Western civilisation, the West is called upon to support a Muslim government that does not hesitate to accept aid and support from the worst incarnations of fundamentalist regimes against traditional Balkan allies of Western/European nations.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> the Chetniks attacked Kozarac, a town on the other side of Prijedor where they were ruining and murdering the non-Serb population. Seven to eight thousand people were killed and taken into camps of death. Thousands of Kozarac residents found themselves in these camps, and many of them were killed or executed. On 30<sup>th</sup> May, many young men and my Edna went to the rescue unarmed, rescuing people from slaughter. Edna was only 21 years old. That night and morning cost them about 30 young lives, while there were 200 Chetniks less. Ten were caught and imprisoned, taken to the concentration camp of Omarska, and murdered in the most brutal ways. Edna withdrew with the wounded ones and moved towards the river Sana in order to get across to the free territory. But the Chetniks kept shooting at them, and they did not manage to get across. Edna hid in the basement at aunt Ibra's together with the wounded. This was Skela area. That night, Chetniks picked all non-Serb residents - all men from the basement that night, as well as Edna's wounded persons. In the middle of the night, she had to transfer herself to another basement, that of Mesic Muharem, and they were in the basement of a Serb woman called Beba where they stayed for four days.

On the fourth day, she said they could all stay, but that Edna could not. On the fifth day, the daughter of Mesic Mubarem, Nasiha, brought Edna home. She herself is married to a Serb. They could not help Edna. When I saw Edna at the gate, I was stunned because I knew that that moment sealed her fate. Edna entered a warehouse where I was sheltered, and she stayed there for nine days. On the tenth day, 14<sup>th</sup> of June, Chetniks police entered and brought a list that was handwritten and that had 25 names on it of persons to be taken away to the concentration camp. Among those names was the name Edna Dautovic, as well as doctor Esad Kovacevic, who for several years had worked as a doctor in African countries. They called her to report to the police station since she had participated in defense and action in attempt to defend the city of Prijedor. Edna stood up, dressed as she was and went on her last journey from home. After an hour, my husband went to the police station, but she had already been taken away to the concentration camp Omarska because she did not want to give a statement. At that moment I fainted and for 13 days I ate or drank nothing. Edna was 180 cm tall like a Barbie doll, and had eyes of a Japanese woman. She had a wish in her life to become a model. That wish never came true for her.



*Edna became a pile of bones with a bullet hole through her head.*

*When Edna was taken away, a nightmare began for us. SDS people attacked us all the time, harassed and terrorised us. Ranko Divljak came to our home three times a day, every day. He was a spy for SDS. Under the excuse that my husband should melt some things together for him, or that I should fix him lunch, he was there to watch us, to see whether we knew anything. I must mention that Muslims, as of 30<sup>th</sup> of May, had to wear white strip-labels on themselves and had to have white flags on their homes. It also went for Croats in town. We started to search for Edna. We went to Omarska camp a few times, but there was no approach to it. We asked all our Serb friends to help us find Edna, but they remained uninvolved.*

*Edna had an ex-boyfriend, Nebojsa Babic. After being together for eight months (we do not know why even today as we never questioned what the young ones chose for themselves) they had broken up before the war. Nebojsa worked at the police station, and I called him on the phone to see what was happening with Edna. I asked why she was taken to Omarska, but he never called back or answered my questions. We learnt after two months when the camp Omarska was closed, from women who were with Edna and survived all horrors of this camp (they were Nusreta Sivac, Biba Harambasic and Dika Menkovic, as well as some 30 other women), that this same Nebojsa was questioning and torturing my Edna. Edna was taken away every night and returned in the morning. She had lost a lot of weight. They did all the worst things to her, and her brother Edwin had to watch all of it. He was himself captured in June and taken to Omarska. Edna also had to watch how her brother was tortured; both of them had to survive and live through all humiliations. Edna cried and told the women what they did to her.*

*One day, an older man, Spasoje, came to Omarska. He was a friend of my husband who also had a private business. He brought some food, and when he saw Edna she was looking very thin, just sitting on some bench. He called to her, but she put her head down. He told her not to be frightened to approach him. She stood up as a deer. He told her how much he appreciates her, as his own daughter. He went into the base to see why she was taken to the concentration camp, and he was told she was in a green beret and that she was convicted to death by court. He cursed them and said it was his friend's daughter, but that did no good. He left with her a pack of cigarettes, as he had nothing else on him. Spasoje told us all this when he came to see us.*



It is interesting to note that IFOR troops in Bosnia displayed a rather unusual degree of initiative when it came to apprehending *Islamic fighters* or *terrorists*. Thus, in late 1995, IFOR mounted an operation to apprehend and detain a number of Iranian soldiers from a *terrorist centre*. Confronted with the question of why the same willingness to act cannot be observed in the apprehension of indicted war criminals, IFOR's representative is forced to argue that the mere possibility of *terrorist attacks* by the *foreign forces* warrants such operations, whereas the actually committed atrocities of the indicted war criminals does not.

**Source:** The Enemy Inside: The Western Involvement with Bosnia and Problem of Securing Identities by Andreas Behnke, Alternatives 23 (1998)





*We begged him to save our Edna, and we offered our gold and our house to him, but he said he could not do it. We found out 17 days later that Edna was still alive, and we learnt this from a man who was a guard at the Omarska concentration camp. He carried over things for a woman neighbour's son, and he carried things over from us to Edna. He told me that Edna was alive and that she worked in the kitchen, but he was not saying that she was tortured and that this was where Croats and Muslims were tortured and killed. On June 24, Edna was taken at 11 p.m. along with Sadeta Medunjanjin and 43 other men by Krupatrans, apparently for exchange. On the bus it said, Autoskola Seselj. The exchange should have been in Bihac, but it never happened.*

*My husband and I had been surviving horrors in Prijedor for three and a half years. We have been attacked and beaten; twice I have saved my husband's life. Once I hit a Chetnik across his chest with an axe, because he tried to kill my Uzeir and me. One of them was pulling the axe from me, while the other was repeatedly hitting me on the head for fifteen minutes. No one approached to help us even though there were many people outside; the Serbs did not want to help, and the Muslims did not dare to. In one moment, Zuhra Hurnic, who had been with Edna at the concentration camp, found the courage to shout out at the police to hurry up, and this is how we were saved from death. We continued to live in Prijedor, we could not get out; apparently Edna and Edwin were contacting us to say they had been exchanged in Bihac, that they were located at the rehabilitation center. This is how they lied to us so we would remain in Prijedor.*

*When people started to come out of the camp, they said that Edwin was in the concentration camp, in the white house of death. I could not believe that Edwin also ended up in the camp. No one could convince me of that. After eight years I learnt the real truth. When I came to Petrovac in October of 1995, I left for Bihac after two days in order to look for my children, because I was told they had been exchanged. With me was Mrs. Samira Hodzic, who helped me a great deal because I did not know Bihac very well. We went to the department of the exchange, and there the authorised person, Suhert Fazlic, looked through all the files and said they were never exchanged. I went to the radio-television where Mrs. Slobodanka Begatovic helped me a lot, via media, to search for my children. It turned out they were not alive. I returned to Bosanski Petrovac, crying. But I told myself, I have to earn money to have the means to search for my children. In Ozren in the year 1995, Chetniks robbed us when we were trying to leave town. As there was no bread, I made the decision to make burek – meat pies – for my husband to sell in order to earn some money, so that we could search for our children.*

*In November, I became active with the Bosniak Women's Association, Bosanski Petrovac, where I still remain the president for humanitarian issues. In 1996, I became active with the International Red Cross where I still assist elderly and disabled persons. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1996, I left for Sarajevo with Djidja Pecenkovic and other women of Bihac for the first BiH women's conference. It was broadcasted in 57 countries. On that day in Sarajevo, I opened my soul and I spoke. I said I had nothing written down, and that with my words I would communicate the pain and suffering of my children and all other disappeared and murdered Prijedor people. There were 37,000 of them killed. Then the entire hall began to cry, as well as the participants, because my sharing had touched them. And when I said I hit a Chetnik with an axe, no one said anything, because they could not understand it at that time in 1992, when they were killing us I was able to do that. That was the very first appeal for the world to learn and know what has been happening in Prijedor. After that, journalists and reporters gathered around me. I remember one Macedonian woman reporter who asked if she could give me a kiss and if she could write a report for a Macedonian paper about what I spoke about. I said surely she could because the truth should go out into the world. After that, I gave hundreds of interviews and tapes released, giving the truth about my children and all others.*

*I have been through the whole of Bosnia and Republika Srpska searching for my children; nothing was hard for me to do. My path through hell continued because I was helping thousand of persons with even greater energy, and I sought to find my children the whole while.*



*The book Mother Mejra, which I wrote and which is published, offers and seeks to find the truth. I began writing it in Prijedor of all most important events that happened. I had to burn it before leaving Prijedor, because it contained all details about tortures and all truths. I still got the book published on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1999, in Bihac. The book holds all my suffering and pain in my search for my children. Ten days after the book was published I had a car accident and doctors had to fight for my life. I had a light brain concussion, damaged my right arm and lost two fingers on that hand after having two operations. One year after the book came out, I learnt the truth about my children. I went to all mass graves/graveyards to see if I could identify or recognise my children in all the remains found. So God wanted that I find my Edwin in Lusca Palanka nearby Sanki Most, in a hall where there were 140 other after-death remains from the Kemljani mass grave; they had been murdered in Omarska. He was found at that warehouse on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2000. I recognised him by his teeth and his bones. When I gave my statement to the judge from Edwin's birth to his death, his height, weight, the doctor brought me teeth of two bodies. I took one of them, and the other one I put down. When I took the first one, I said, **this is my son's**. Never has a body's remains pulled me so much as at that time when I took his teeth. I asked doctor Sarajlic Nermin to take me to the rest of the remains of my son. He was hesitant as he thought it would be hard for me, but I told him I could take it. He took me there, and when he opened the KV14004B bag, while he was placing together the head, my husband's face appeared because they resembled one another. That is when I said, **that is my son**.*

*For three months, I went there every week to learn something new from the remains. Doctor Eva Kolinovski helped me immensely to get DNA. Even though I was sure it was our son, we had to give it, and it was sent to Madrid for analysis. Two months later, the results confirmed it was Edwin. Many television stations and reporters were included in this process, such as ITAKA, ZDF, Channel 1, Ms. Utlika Bauer, journalist Wojtek from Poland, as well as some USA TV with Mr. Todd, and Italian Valencia that were broadcasting from the warehouse, to later make a film. A few days after I found Edwin, some people came from Den Hague, Mrs. Brenda Hols, public attorney, as well as Mr. Tarik Malik. They asked me additional questions because I am a witness for Den Hague.*

*I learned about a mass grave of Lisac from Bosanska Krupa a few months ago. Mr. Jajramovic Esad, who is an investigator at the Commission for Missing Persons, told me they were waiting for the green light from Den Hague to open the mass grave. Ms. Brenda told me that the priority is to open this mass grave, which happened on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2000. I met with Ms. Eva, Ms. Masavic and other people from the Commission at a hotel in Sanski Most. That was when they told me they were doing preparations and that they would be taking out the remains of dead bodies. The next day, I was already at the Lisac mass grave where with my own eyes I saw the digging of the death remains - among which was my Edna's. That evening I got sick and went to the hospital where everyone was helping me. When the weekend came, I left the hospital, still ill, and went for the promotion of the newly published book *Knjiga Nestalih Opstine Prijedor* (Book of the Disappeared from Prijedor Municipality), and on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July I was at the graveyards of murdered Muslims found in mass graves around Prijedor. The same day, returning from Prijedor, I went to visit shehid mezar graves; the women of Srebrenica were also there.*



Around 1 p.m., I held my Edna's head at the Sejkovac warehouse in Sanski Most where the remains were brought from Lisac cave. At that moment I saw Ms. Eva Fisher crying when she saw me holding my Edna's head. I recognised Edna by her tooth, because it got chipped day before she was taken to the concentration camp. The body remains were taken to Visoko where the autopsy was conducted by the Den Hague team. They sent the DNA immediately, and three weeks later it was confirmed that it was Edna's body. Then I asked Mr. Sljivar Vehid where Edwin's body was so that I could bury my children together. He told me that Edwin, along with five other bodies for which DNA was done, was buried in Kozarac. I asked him how could they be buried since it was agreed they remain at the warehouse. My troubles began again, because I had to ask the Serb authorities in Prijedor to give me the sanitary paper for digging out and transferring the remains of Edwin from Kozarac to the Sejkovac warehouse, once again. Also, a Serb police officer needed to be present while taking out the remains, and I achieved this with the help of superintendent Nurija Jakupovic, who engaged an officer to be present. I dug Edwin out and transferred him to the Sejkovac warehouse. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of October I organised the burial of my children. Dzenaza was on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, and it started in front of the Sejkovac warehouse to Bosanski Petrovac where noon *namaz* prayers took place. From there it moved to Bihac into the Harem Humke, where the children as well as all soldiers of our Bosnia USK (Unsko-Sanski Kanton) were buried. The burial was followed by four TV houses, as well as numerous friends, Federation Army members, families, and women friends-survivors of Omarska.

I found my children after eight years of searching, during which the whole of me was dedicated to searching for the missing – disappeared persons. For the past two years, I have been asked to be in the association for seeking missing persons, and I am intensely working with the media. Today, even though I found my children and buried them, I now work with even greater desire on all that I have been actively participating in. Only this year I have actualised six projects for returnees within Republika Srpska, and this being done with the support of an organisation from Malta. It entails donations of sheep, goats and cows. These days we are intensely doing preparations, again with the support of the Malta organisation for packages for 1,300 families who are returnees, displaced persons and socially deprived persons - all in Bosanski Petrovac regardless of where they come from. When this is done, I will be happy because I have helped my people, and I will continue to help. It keeps me going in my life.

With this I end my extensive description of my life and sufferings of my children. I want no mother on this planet to give herself to despair, because rescue is in work. Do not let yourselves be cut up by grief or death, even if it is your children's death. Have faith and hope in yourself and in the goal you want to achieve in your life.

Do not fall at the hardest times.

You are greeted by Mother Mejra, who has lost everything in her life but her pride and spirit yet keeps on moving and working towards peace.



Closing the tear  
of your wound with your two hands,  
you are carrying a star in your breast,  
but that star will fall.

If you fall  
one evening twilight,  
you should fall like the sun,  
and behind you thousands of shooting stars

Nevzat Celik, Turkey

## When the "civilised" guillotine replaced "barbaric" cannibalism

*Testimony on Militarisation in the Pacific*  
*Susanna Ounei, Kanaky Islands, Aotearoa*

*Before I speak I would like to give my respects to the people of South Africa. It is a privilege to be here with you. We have heard so much about your struggle, and we were all concerned in the Pacific.*

*I was asked to speak on militarisation and nuclearisation, but I believe that the issue of militarisation is inextricably linked to colonisation. Since the 1960s, after the first bomb was dropped by the French Government in Mururoa (Tahiti), the world has been silenced. Protests and petitions were organised around the world to stop the nuclear tests, but very little protest was made about the colonisation of Kanaky. I want to point out here that the roots of nuclearisation and militarisation are in the wealth of the country - in nickel, zinc, cobalt, iron, manganese, gold and the recent discovery of one of the world's biggest oil sites. It was big news at home and earned the newspaper headline, *The Discovery of the Black Gold*. Projects of big multinationals are already being undertaken. As I predicted in one of my interviews at home with the French Television after the Noumea Accords - a 15 or 20 year plan followed with a referendum concerning independence signed between the French Government, the leaders of our movement and the leaders of the right wing party - there is no way that France would give us our independence.*

*For me, the Noumea Accords is just the repetition of the Matignon Accords signed in 1988 after the execution of the 19 Kanak brothers and nephews in my island of Ouvea, New Caledonia. As I said in English in the book *Tugalala*, published in 1992, and reiterated in French during that interview in 1999, *the rich became richer and the poor poorer*. Since 1969, I have been fighting for independence and against neo-colonialism. I was arrested in 1974 with 12 other friends and sentenced to prison. The struggle was extremely difficult, especially when there were only a few of us to build the independence movement. Even today, it is still hard for me in New Caledonia because of all my activities for our liberation. For despite equal opportunity at all levels, even now after our independence, I am jobless. The French government and its allies will never dare to give a good employment, and I am not surprised.*



*In 1995, after the death of my mother, I was called back by my people to inherit my mother's heritage, which was the heritage of her father for thousands of generations. Life was really tough. You know the struggle is not only against the army. There are other ways to kill someone slowly; I called this the policy of witch hunting. All my mails were intercepted, nobody knew I was there, I hardly received the letters from overseas, from Noumea the capital of Kanaky, and when I was on the phone with someone, the conversation would be cut off or if someone rang, inside the telephone a voice would say in French *ce telephone n'est plus en service* meaning *this telephone does not function*. At least with the police and the army you know when you are facing the enemies, but within our society there are only a few people used by the French Government to discretely reduce life to real agony. After four years and four months of pressure and agony, including being robbed more than 153 times, I finally decided in April 2000 to come back to New Zealand with my two children. When the children saw me under the pressure of injustice, their morale went down. I thought that for my family's survival, I would have to stay alive - especially for the children, because when I am talking about politics, I am talking about the future of all Kanak children.*

*In 1853, Admiral Febrier Despointes raised the tricolor flag and solemnly declared New Caledonia as French national property.*

*Throughout the 1850s, 60s and 70s, there were widespread but isolated rebellions against the decrees: proclamation of all lands as the property of the state, distribution of the lands to the Europeans, ratification of the expropriation of chiefs that gave the right to dissolve all tribes and expel insubordinates from the colony, the prohibition of cannibalism, the distribution of the land to the criminal renegades who were brought from France to the country because it was considered as a penal colony, and bloody reprisals. When the French military realised that the Kanaks were not scared anymore of being killed with guns, they brought the guillotine and publicly executed the Kanaks. So the civilised guillotine replaced the more barbaric cannibalism.*

*I start no  
wars, raining poison  
on cathedrals,  
melting stars of david  
into golden faucets  
to be lighted by lamps  
shaded by human skin...*

## Militarisation in the Pacific

*The legacy of colonisation is the loss of land, language and culture, a warped development and worst of all, the colonisation of people's minds so that they no longer trust their own traditions and history but look to Europe for answers. And Europe has nothing to offer but death.*

Death that has entered the Pacific in the guise of militarisation that has overtly and insidiously spread across the region through militarisation of their economies, of their cultures and of their minds.

On 3 February 1988, US Naval Secretary, James Webb urged the Pentagon to shift its focus to the Pacific. This was no new policy direction, for the US Navy and Marine presence in the Pacific was well established during World War II. The US Navy was also involved in the administration of Micronesia in the 1940s after the war, and the US Pacific command, which covers the Indian and Pacific oceans, had long been established. The only shift that was heralded in 1986 was the US move to integrate its strategic and military interests. The Pacific region has therefore become the global hub of US military activities. Now it is the Pentagon's intention to *safeguard* US interests in the region.

In 1987, when the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty removed Earth to Sky Cruise Missiles from European soil, all that happened was sea-based forces increased their sway. The number of US sea-launched Cruise missiles almost doubled the number of missiles abolished under the INF Treaty, and by early 1990, almost one-third of the world's nuclear weapons were at sea - an estimated 16,000 nuclear weapons belonging to the US, Russia, Britain, France and China.



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Even as some of the nations like that of Micronesia move towards self-government, it is not independent of the Pentagon's presence. These smaller nations, dependent upon US aid, are susceptible to the pressure to allow military bases in their territories, often at the expense of their own needs.

After the US, France has the most bases in the region and indeed around the world, more than any other nation. The nations of Kanaky, Wallis, Futura and Tahiti-Polynesia are crucial to France's position as a global military power. Tahiti-Polynesia's capital, Papeete which houses part of the French Pacific Fleet, is littered with military installations, including a large rest and recreation facility.

*Demilitarisation* of European land was achieved at the cost of militarising the Pacific Ocean. Global peace therefore became a mythical construct, lost under a plethora of hypocritical peace treaties.

Militarisation is taking its toll on the people of the Pacific at various levels.

At the most obvious level is the ever present threat of annihilation for it is a fact that the nuclear weapons presently deployed are capable of destroying homes, villages and whole islands anywhere in the Pacific in a matter of minutes.

*Kanak resistance started with the first national uprising lead by Chief Atai in 1878, which saw numerous tribes joining together in armed revolt. The colonial administration used the 1878 revolt to introduce more segregation laws, and one of them was the Native law in 1887, which prohibited the Kanaks from going to Noumea White town. That law was only abolished in 1946.*

*In 1917, the Kanaks were dispirited by the loss of their lands and the burning of their villages by the army. Chief Noel organised another national rebellion, and again, this resulted in deaths and reprisals of the Kanaks, the final indignity being the triumphant display of Noel's head by the French.*

*The effects of colonial extermination phase were too strong. The killings, the loss of land and death combined with disease drastically reduced the Kanaks. Estimates of the pre-colonial Kanak population ranged from 200,000 to 500,000. By 1926, it had fallen to less than 27,000 and it was believed the race would eventually die out altogether.*

*Subdued, demoralised and headed for extinction, Kanaks were treated like museum pieces. In 1931, Kanaks labeled Cannibals from New Caledonia were displayed in the Colonial Exposition in Paris.*

*The period from the end of the Second World War until 1969 was one in which France removed the formal legal barriers that discriminated against the Kanak people. Nevertheless, it left the colonial structures- political, economic and social - in place. Colonial institutions, while legally open to Kanaks, were just as effective at preventing Kanaks from gaining equal opportunities with the settler population.*

*During this assimilation period, the Kanaks benefited from the new post-war French Constitution, which guaranteed to all equal access to state services and the exercise of rights and freedom, individually and collectively. New Caledonia's official status changed from a colony to an Overseas Territory.*

*However, it was not until 1957 that Kanaks were granted the same civil rights.*

*The reforms did not always lead towards Kanak freedom, but they represented the first improvements in the life condition of the Kanaks. It was the first time they could live without the daily fear of direct physical violence against them.*



The modern Kanak independence movement began with the return of a Kanak student, Nidoish Naisseline, who was the son of a high chief from France. He created a group called the Red Scarves and asked for the revalorisation of the Kanak world, which was pejorative, and also for the revalorisation of our culture, asserting Kanak power and reclaiming stolen Kanak lands. At that time, it was our young generation that followed Nidoish in militant action against the French rule. Naisseline was arrested on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1969 for inciting racial hatred. The colonial justice system, which is founded on racial hatred, convicted him on this charge and sentenced him to prison. In 1972, Naisseline was again sentenced to prison for saying to a police officer, *this is not France and I don't care about your uniform, the man behind it is an imbecile.*

The first reaction of the colonial authorities was to send the police and the army to attack every Red Scarves demonstration. In 1972, the Prime Minister Pierre Messmer declared, "the French presence in New Caledonia can only be threatened...by a nationalist movement of the indigenous population supported by some eventual allies in other ethnic communities coming from the Pacific. In the short and medium term, massive immigration of French metropolitan citizens or people from overseas departments should allow this danger to be avoided by maintaining and improving the numerical balance between the communities. In the long term, the indigenous nationalist movement will only be avoided if the communities of non-Pacific origins represent a majority demographic mass...The success of this exercise, indispensable for the maintenance of French positions east of the Suez, depends, among other conditions, on our ability to finally achieve, after so many impediments in our history, an operation of overseas settlements."

The settlement policy that followed this declaration kept the Kanak population in minority positions and enabled successive French administration to claim that it would be undemocratic to give independence to New Caledonia because the majority of Caledonians did not support it. Within four years of Messmer's declaration, 15,000 new immigrants arrived in New Caledonia. This meant that from 1969 to 1976, although the Kanak population increased by more than 20 percent, it dropped from being 45.9 percent of the total population to 41.7 percent.

...I set no  
store on the strange lands.  
send no  
missionaries beyond my  
borders,  
to plunder secrets  
and barter souls.

Maya Angelou

Further, organised violence is not simply imposed on the region from without. For instance, the Government of Papua, New Guinea has fought against the people of Bougainville. And while the struggle has its genesis in the protesting of abuses of an Australian-owned copper mining company, the armed response of the PNG Government has precipitated the situation into a demand for sovereignty. In 1987, military coups destabilised Fijian society amid numerous human rights violations. Indonesian invasion of East Timor and West Papua has once again triggered a war for self-determination.

*Where and how these wars began and were sustained has to be understood at the deepest and most intricate levels for any peaceful resolution..*

The other effects of this total militarisation forced on the people is far more profound and far-reaching, for the existence of organised armed violence within a community militarises every aspect of that society.

For at the deeper level, "military values, ideology and patterns of behaviour achieve a dominating influence on the political, social, economic and external life of the State, and as a consequence, the structural, ideological and behavioural pattern of both society and government are militarised."

**Source:** Background note prepared for the Nga Wahine Pacifica, the Pacific Court of Women, September 1999, Auckland, Aotearoa.



Most of the new settlers were attracted to New Caledonia by the nickel boom. They were given employment ahead of Kanaks, and they could not see how they were also being used by France to undermine the Kanak Movement. The settlers who arrived could see only their individual situations and were unable to see how French imperialist interests were benefiting both from their labour power and their presence in New Caledonia.

On September 24, 1974, we demonstrated against the military parade that was celebrating the possession of New Caledonia. The French authorities attacked the Kanaks; many were injured and two arrested. On September 25, we went for a Pacific occupation in the court to ask the release of our two friends, and again, the well-armed French police surrounded us; some of them were blocking the main door of the court, and we were badly beaten up. I was bleeding and my back was swollen. It was the same for my friends, especially white males who were seriously injured all over their bodies. Twelve of us were arrested and sentenced to prison.

In 1975, the police killed a youth. We organised a big and strong protest right in the heart of Noumea. The French government demonstrated its power by sending the police and the army to intimidate us from protesting. However, the young generation joined our ranks, even the kids aged 9 to 16. Some of them were leading our struggle in Kanaky while others were executed in the massacre in 1988 in the cave of Ouvea.

In 1976, we planned to protest in Noumea in support of our students in France who were evicted from the Caledonian Students Hostel because only white rich kids from New Caledonia were allowed in that hostel. We hadn't even started to march when the police encircled us and started beating us. The elected member of the Territorial Assembly and leader of our movement, Yan Celene Uregei (who died last year), was savagely beaten and brought to the hospital; he was injured on the head.

In 1977 and 1978, the repression was heightened all over the country.

In 1979, the education system was so selective and racist that two of our members, who were the only Kanaks teaching in one of the top high schools called Lycee La Perouse, were expelled because of their political commitment. This time, all the youth boycotted the French school in Noumea. For weeks, there was a lot of physical violence inflicted by the police and the army. At night around 8 pm we were surrounded by the army, which launched teargas at us and beat us with rifle butts. Many of our people were seriously injured; some were brought to the hospital in coma and others were tortured in the police station.

In 1980, the Club Med of Ouvea was burnt again, and the army inflicted a lot of violence against the people of Ouvea. Four of our young were arrested, tortured and sentenced to prison. These four youth were innocent, but the French army needed some scapegoats. While the protests went on in Ouvea, I organised the Women for the Independence Front to demonstrate against the violence in Ouvea and asked for the release of our youth. We started with less than 100 women and ended up with 5,000 people. We demonstrated all day, and at the end of the day the fight broke up between the army and us. As usual, we couldn't see anything in town with the smog of teargas. This running and fighting back with stones against the police and army became a game for our young people.



*In 1981, one of our leaders Pierre Declerq, who was from France, was assassinated because he was part of us. However, for his funeral, thousands of people walked from Noumea to the tribe. All over the country, the Kanak people lead by Eloi Machoro, who was later executed by the army, organised barricades and protests in retaliation to Declerq's assassination.*

*In January 1983, the people of the tribe of Koinde-Oui-Point protested against the pollution of their waters by a French sawmill. The people were asking the French government to stop the sawmill because the river was polluted, the fish were contaminated, and the people were getting sick. The owner Barbou came and promised the tribe that he would stop his sawmill and in December, he would give 4 million Pacific francs in compensation for the ten years of pollution of the river. Instead of money coming in December, it was the army with helicopters, tanks, etc. that came. They surrounded the small village and from a distance of a few metres they threw grenades and began to shoot at the people. The people retaliated and shot dead two of them. When the army realised that two of them were killed, they went back to their camp and a couple of hours later, they came back, surrounded the village, put the people in the church and tortured them. Almost all the men were incarcerated for many years.*

*When I heard the news, I drove to the tribe situated in the district of Lafoa, two hours driving from Noumea. The tribe of Koinde-Oui-Point is right on the top of the mountain where I had to drive for at least one and a half more hour. The people were really moved to see me and they all cried. There were only women and children. I took notes of all the information during the events and wrote down all of their needs because there was nothing left, including the materials for gardening - everything was confiscated by the army. While the people were crying, I didn't realise that I was the first person that had come to visit them after the events. Once in Noumea, I wrote articles that were published in our Kanak Trade Union newspaper, and the leaflets were distributed in Noumea by my women's group. I put a lot of pressure on the political parties to help the people of Koinde-Oui-Point. A week later, I went back to the tribe with spades, forks, knives, and machetes for the garden. This time, I made sure that one of the political parties came with me.*

## **Violence Against Women and the Land**

It is evident from the evidentiary presentation submitted to the Court that violence against women in the Pacific Basin and against their indigenous culture and traditional lands is extensive and in many cases, flagrant. In some instances, this violence is the manifestation of the official policies of governments whose objectives are the continuing colonisation of indigenous people and genocide; the extraction of valuable natural resources, the destruction of traditional, cultural and social systems and the denial of fundamental human rights including the right of self-determination.

These policies have had devastating ramifications in terms of human suffering, death and mutation. In addition, these policies have resulted in the displacement of the indigenous people from their lands, poverty, toxification and the degradation of the lands and natural resources of the Pacific.

It is also evident from the testimony presented that violence against women in the Pacific Basin and against indigenous cultures and traditional land has taken less obvious and viable forms. Significant evidence received from witnesses revealed that nation states, including the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and France, have tried to minimise the violence in the sanitised language of *structural and social adjustment* and *economic boycott or benefit*. These social and governmental policies seek to personalise issues relating to violence against women and their cultures and lands, and to relegate these political injustices and human rights violations to the realm of the domestic.



Human rights cannot be *privatised, individualised, or domesticated* by such governmental action and policies either under national or international law.

Testimony and evidence received from West Papua, the Solomon Island, East Timor and Bougainvillea indicate that other Western nation states have been complicitous in supporting violence in the Pacific Region by providing other states with military advice, intelligence, troops, equipment and mercenaries. These governments include the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa and the Netherlands.

### *Militarism in the Pacific*

Militarism and the imposition of transnational and national economic development are the two most significant causes of violence in the Pacific Basin. Direct testimony to the history of militarisation of the Pacific reveals the following:

Militarisation in the Pacific began in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century with the activities of Magellan, Abel Tasman and later James Cook; armed conflict and occupation was historically pursued by Westerners (Europeans and Americans) in Hawaii, New Caledonia/ Kanaky, Wallis, Futuna, Aotearoa/ New Zealand, Australia, Guam, Tahiti, West Papua and East Timor. Through this militarised process of colonisation, Western powers gained control of the Pacific. Western colonies include Samoa (NZ and Germany), Fiji (UK), Vanuatu (France and UK), New Caledonia/Kanaky (France), Hawaii and Samoa (USA), FSM, Marshalls and Solomons (UK). The only Pacific indigenous nation never to have been colonised is Tonga. Several Pacific colonies were granted independence as the result of the UN decolonisation process. However, these *independent* natives continue to be utilised as economic colonies for the West and global and regional multinationals. Hawaii, East Timor, New Caledonia/Kanaky, Tahiti, and the US Trust Territories and Guam continue to be subjected to foreign domination and control.

*In my home in Ouvea, the hotel was burnt several times since the 1970s. Since then, Ouvea had become notorious among the French authorities. In August 1983, the hotel was totally burnt down. As usual, the army came, and anyone walking on the road that had nothing to do with the fire was arrested as a scapegoat and tortured in the gendarmerie. Two of our people were arrested and sentenced to prison without enough evidence against them. I organised the people of Ouvea to protest the incarceration of our two people. There was a lot of media criticism about Ouvea being a real terrorist base.*

*In the same year, the French government for the first time formally recognised the Kanak people and their active right to independence. France agreed to the Kanak demand for a referendum on independence. (Although since then it had begun to talk about **independence in association with France** - a form of independence in which France would retain its military presence and control over foreign policy). Ever since this time, however, there has been an irresolvable conflict between the Kanak people and the French state over the details of when this should be held and who should be allowed to take part in it. The Kanak people demand that the referendum on independence should be held immediately and restricted to people with at least one parent born in New Caledonia. France has been trying to postpone the referendum and allow all residents of New Caledonia to vote in it.*

*The French position provoked the biggest Kanak uprising since 1917. The 1984 election to implement the new law, the **Lemoine Statute**, was boycotted by over eighty per cent of the Kanak people who launched a militant campaign of disruption. During this campaign, a group of settlers ambushed and massacred a group of unarmed Kanaks. Although the settlers freely admitted what they had done, the colonial regime found them not guilty of murder on the grounds that they acted in self-defence.*

*Unable to end the Kanak revolt by persuasion, the French government and its army executed the Kanak resistance leader, Eloi Machoro on 12 January 1985. The French State needed to remind the Kanak people that it alone had the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.*



The execution of Machoro contained Kanak resistance for three years. Then, in 1988, another major uprising took place in protest against another new law being imposed by France, the *Pons Statute*. Machoro's campaign had been based on evicting hostile settlers on the east coast of the mainland, and it caused no deaths. But during the 1988 uprising, Kanak from my island of Ouvea tried to occupy a gendarmerie and, in the process, killed four gendarmes and fled into the bush with the remaining thirty gendarmes as hostages.

At that particular time, the right-wing French Overseas Territories Minister, Bernard Pons, called the attack an outrage and announced that the perpetrators would be dealt with to the full extent of his powers. The island was totally sealed off, and elite French troops were flown in from France. After pretending to negotiate, they attacked the Kanaks who were holding the hostages and killed 19 of them, including at least five who were executed after surrendering.

Within a few days of the massacre, Pons and the rest of the right-wing government was replaced by the *socialist* government of Michel Rocard. A few weeks later, Rocard reinstated the Matignon Accord - an agreement between the leaders of the Kanak independence movement, the main settler Party and the French Government, which agreed to postpone the referendum on independence for ten years and allow all but a few of the settler population to vote.

This view, however, ignored the fact that the Ouvea massacre and the Matignon Accords were carried out by the same French state. It represents the same interests, uses the same army led by the same generals and was headed by the same *socialist*, President Mitterand. Rocard himself points out that the Matignon accord is an attempt to ensure a continued French presence in New Caledonia.

The history of French colonial rule in New Caledonia is based on the suppression of all Kanak authority by the French.

With the Noumea Accords signed in May 1999, there is nothing peaceful at home just as there was nothing peaceful about the post-war reforms.



### *Genocide in Rongelap*

Jelly babies and radiation poisoning: radiation poisoning continues to claim lives due to leukemia and cancer. Video documentary evidence verified radiation exposure due to US military nuclear activity. Significant evidence of birth defects, retardation and jelly babies are documented. There is documented evidence that the indigenous peoples of Rongelap continue to be used as objects of scientific and military studies of the effects of radiation on humans.

Complete destruction of the indigenous culture is underway. There is an acute and continuing need for medical treatment for the Marshallese peoples. Children of successive generations born to these women and men have been exposed to radiation and have significant problems with birth defects including blindness. The indigenous peoples of Rongelap continue to suffer from dislocation and poverty.

Extracts from The Judgments and Response of the Panel of Jurists on *Nga Wahine Pacifica*, The Pacific Court of Women on Violence Against Women and Land; organised by AWHRC and Maori Women's Network in September 1999, Auckland, Aotearoa.



Session IV

## Wars against Women

*Women in all cultures and societies have in different ways been marginalised and silenced. But the woman, particularly in the global south, is not only being forced to bear the brunt of the increasing impoverishment of her people but also the increasing disintegration of her cultures and communities under the onslaught of consumerism. Women who spoke in this session testified to the violence of reconstructing traditions and brutalised patriarchies.*

### *Visual Testimony*

#### **Expert Witness:**

Amina Mama, South Africa

Gangamma, India

Ragia Omran, Egypt

Mercy Senahe, Ghana

Nooria Shafiq, Afghanistan

Esther Rasesemola, South Africa

*Dowry Murders*

*Female Genital Mutilation*

*Trokozi*

*Fundamentalism*

*Witch killings*

Amina Mama, South Africa  
*Expert Witness*



*My greetings, members of the public, women and men of the jury, and all the women gathered here to speak and to listen. I spent several days preparing myself for this occasion. After what we have seen and heard today, I must confess that I am unprepared. On reflection, I would say that no amount of preparation would have been enough. In fact one should never be prepared for such horrors as have been presented before us here today, because they are and should be, unacceptable. We must never be able to accept such violence and pain, and we must direct all our efforts here today to preventing such evil from continuing and from recurring.*

*It has been very difficult to go through today. It is a day on which the borders between testifiers and witnesses has been dissolved, to such an extent that most of us called here as experts could equally have been giving testimonies, and I daresay, that there are members of the jury of wise women and men who could also have been giving testimonies. I, for example, listened with empathy and pain, as my own memories that I have forced back for many years were resurrected. Horrors seen in childhood, during the outbreak of a civil war in my hometown, came back as I listened to women here, and I am deeply humbled by the courage of all those who have spoken so far. But women have been speaking for a long time, and women have spoken out for centuries. The challenge of today is that it cannot end here, with more speaking. What will we do with all of this?*



*I have been asked to speak of the War against Women. We all know that war is commonly and most simply defined as a state created by the use of armed force between countries, or between rival groups in a nation. A country is in a state of war when armed forces engage in battle. Given the military history of the world, this is clearly a condition that involves men much more than it involves women. The conventional military forces of the modern world have above all been patriarchal, in many cases exclusively made up of men. Militarism and therefore war have long been equated with masculinity and patriarchal civilisations.*

*When the British arrived in the exceedingly un-Victorian Burma almost a century ago, they were so shocked to observe women being treated as human beings, that they decided to civilise the Burmese. How? By enjoining their government to rapidly facilitate the civilising mission by making the men into men and the women into women, through the establishment of a Burmese army. (There was of course the additional benefit to the Queen and country of having more troops to dispatch around the Empire, as and when needed).*

*We have heard much today about the horrors that war unleashes on women.*

*But this session is designed to explore phenomena that would not normally have been included under the rubric of war so much as the rubric of culture.*

*This is indeed a challenge. There is no visible army as such, and until recently there were no clearly identifiable refugees and victims of this kind of war. The weaponry does not include guns and bombs, the fight does not involve military strategists. The war I have been directed to discuss is a much more complicated affair. While it is a war against women, you and I know that women are often complicit in the upholding of traditions that are inimical to women. Some women actually perpetrate harmful practices – the old women who come with the knives and earn their livings by cutting and stitching, or who sing, ululate and dance to the screams of an infibulated child's wedding night. I have heard those screams, years ago in a Sudanese hotel – jerked awake by this awful sound, I rushed into the hotel corridor and there I saw old men rubbing their hands in glee, but then I also saw the women who had dressed the bride and feasted in celebration. Women often join men to insist that family honour and tradition be upheld. Older women, perhaps victims of previous cruelty themselves, now bully and mistreat their daughters-in-law, as a means of extorting material goods from her family.*

*This is a war perpetrated by a male-dominated system – a patriarchal system that has the power to direct the definition of culture and value.*

*Why would we deploy the term war where no armies or heavy weaponry are involved, for the quiet and intimately executed acts of genital cutting, bride burning, witch-hunting and the ritual sacrifice of women to the priests of the shrine? Because it is a way of forcing public attention to matters that society refuses to acknowledge as being problematic.*

*I believe this session is designed to deploy the metaphor of war and to challenge the culturally justified and systematic damaging of women, through ritual, physical mutilation, immolation and femicide. The testimonies that will be heard are all from women who have been subjected to such practices, and who have survived. That patriarchal systems condone and tolerate the harming of women in culturally justified ways is not news to any of us, but for us as postcolonial subjects, whose cultures have come out of an experience of colonial subjugation, racism and apartheid, it presents particular challenges.*

*The first is the challenge of cultural domination.*

*Women who challenge gender inequality and injustice are commonly accused of betrayal, and in these instances it is our traditions and cultures that we are alleged to be betraying. But our traditions and our culture ceased to be discrete long ago. We have endured centuries of cosmopolitanism and subjection, mediated by unequal global power relations. So-called postcolonial contexts such as ours continue to be subject to the global hegemony, to Western, particularly North American cultural imperialism. Take a stroll through the latest shopping mall, listen to the rhythms, see the styles favoured by the youth in the Mother City of Cape Town, and see for yourself which of the many cultural sources is most evident.*



The advent of new technologies has only deepened this challenge of cultural and intellectual domination, of Eurocentrism. The charge of **betrayal** is much more loaded than it might be if our societies enjoyed a greater degree of respect. The fact of cultural imperialism means that **any internal criticism is experienced through that lens**, and immediately provokes defensive reactions. When we challenge certain practices, our challenges, no matter how locally generated and authentic, are rejected as **foreign-inspired** and dismissed as being an **external** intrusion. Yet women in our communities have mobilised against infibulation and clitoridectomy for a very long time. Women have resisted and fled from their in-laws and violent husbands too. Our capacity for internal and autonomous negotiation and development of our cultures, so that they are indeed reflective of the lived realities of all our people, is stifled by such paranoia. It is subverted by the global dynamics that privilege certain customs and values over others, dynamics that fetishize some of the most obscure aspects of our traditions while ignoring some of the most inspirational and positive aspects.

Yet on another level, our leaders, most of who, even today, are still men, eagerly embrace other accoutrements of modernisation. Industrialisation has bought fast cars; we eagerly and at times uncritically gawk at satellite TV. Holier-than-thou men download internet porn all over the **bastions of tradition**, while women are stoned to death for alleged immorality, as if their blood could cover over the cracks in the edifices of so-called traditional values. A **highly selective engagement with globalisation indeed!** That is how it comes to pass that Sudanese women are fired from respectable professions, accused of taking jobs from men, while the exploitation of poorer women as factory workers is tolerated. Is this so-called religious fundamentalism spiritually enriching? Or simply a convenient servant of renewed capitalism! We cringe at the injustice of such double standards.

All the harrowing things we are including under the rubric of War against Women are culturally justified in the sense that **they have something to do with tradition**. They are all phenomena that an **outsider** would be encouraged to leave alone, on the basis that they are about **culture** and in this multicultural world of ours, local cultures must be respected.

*This is the basis of the second challenge we face, namely that of cultural reaction.*

*Selected traditions are valorised and suddenly become definitive of our identities. Very often those elements that have been elevated in this way are, ironically, exactly those which fascinated those of the Western intelligentsia who decided to admire and ennoble the primitives instead of simply despising and derogating them. The selection is not arbitrary because it is heavily gendered, uncritically reflecting a combination of the thwarted will to power of colonial masculinity on the one hand, and the fantasies of imperial masculinity on the other. Patriarchy in the colonies was always Janus-faced.*

*Our postcolonial situation is one in which women often become the major currency for displays of cultural nationalism, perhaps because postcolonial cultures derive from contradictory conditions that are nonetheless predominantly constituted out of masculine yearnings and memories. Patriarchs living in an era of international women's movements dream of a past in which men were men and women knew their place, they enjoy fantasies that hinge on their sexual prowess and power over women.*

*Cultural nationalism is therefore manifesting as a reassertion of the urges and anxieties of old men. Therefore these phenomena are both old and new: old because they hark back to an imaginary past, and new because it is the fear of the contemporary conditions that generate this nostalgic neurosis.*

*History suggests that we can anticipate collusion between imperial and indigenous patriarchal manifestations. Perhaps that is why the EU is displaying a remarkable reluctance to make improvements in the rights of women a condition for entry into the EU.*



Globalisation is  
producing a proliferation  
of neurotic responses at  
the local level, many of  
them patriarchal  
reassertions

Years ago, Nigerian women raised their protesting voices all over that vast and complicated land, objecting to the death of a 12-year-old girl, *Hauwa Abubakar* who had fled the marital home repeatedly, with the consequence that her infuriated husband took an axe to her legs, damaging her so badly that both had to be amputated, although she still bled to death. That child would have been an adult by now, perhaps the mother of a 12-year-old of her own, had she survived. But the global situation was as relevant then as it is now. Her father, a poor man heavily indebted to *Hauwa's* killer/husband, sent her back each time she ran away, back to her parents. He

was typical of many poor and penniless farmers all over the periphery, so we could just as easily attribute her death to the World Bank's structural adjustment policies, as to traditional marital arrangements. Her death was an entirely modern phenomenon, a consequence of indebtedness.

A more recent death illustrates my point even further. I respectfully invoke the name of *Semira Adamu*, a young Nigerian woman who was choked to death by a Belgian official in Brussels airport in the summer of 1999. She too had fled a marriage arranged by her family, only to fall foul of European immigration authorities who dismissed her application to remain in Europe, probably on the grounds that what she was avoiding was a question of culture rather than one of human rights. It was international complicity in local atrocities, fuelled by a xenophobic racism that disqualified *Semira* from humane treatment.

The recent flogging of the Nigerian teenager named *Bariya Ibrahim Magazu*, accused of zina (unlawful sex) is another case in point. This public flogging did not conform to any known tradition, Islamic or otherwise. She was flogged on the orders of the new civilian rulers of Zamfara state, on the first anniversary of their having declared that it be governed by Sharia law. The evidence that she was raped, her own father having prostituted her to three men in settlement of his debts, was conveniently ignored, as were the appeals of local women's groups and progressive Muslims and the advice of leading experts in Islamic jurisprudence. This manifestation of culture (a perversion of religious law) was a demonstration of political prowess. Appeals for clemency and justice were ignored on the basis that this child represented a threat to Islam. Perhaps these old men do have good reason to feel threatened, but how is the unjust flogging of children going to help?

*Culture is above all dynamics and change. This means that what we should be questioning is the moments at which particular cultural manifestations are lifted out of their dynamism, fixed, and rendered unquestionable and eternal, and so exempted from considerations of justice, rights and equity. What are the forces that freeze some things as tradition while other things move on and change? How is it that man can get up from the modern act of watching CNN on his 21<sup>st</sup> century satellite television, and then commit an apparently medieval act such as stoning a woman to death?*

*What I am saying in the end is this: If there is a War against Women it is not just the result of atavistic traditions that exist in 'Third World' contexts. Rather even the most cultural and religious phenomena, the most traditional of practices have taken on entirely modern manifestations. The conditions that lead men to repudiate and assassinate their daughters, that lead women to arrange the mutilation of their own daughters are conditions of today. In the latter case, women do this in order to ensure that they can compete successfully in an increasingly competitive and commodified marriage market, within a narrowed field of options. The conditions of economic deterioration and diminishing options are linked to the latest and most complicated stage of imperialism – we call this globalisation.*

*Globalisation is producing a proliferation of neurotic responses at the local level, many of them patriarchal reassertions. That is why we see upsurges in clitoridectomy and infibulation, epidemics of dowry deaths, new witch hunts and new outbreaks of zombies stalking across impoverished communities that have been left offline. We can watch TV but we cannot pass through the hi-tech gates of the global village. How can we expect our rural poor to make sense of the fact that while they labour on for peanuts, unimagined concentrations of wealth suddenly appear in a few hands as if by magic. Little wonder that nonsense is made out of no sense: hapless women are blamed, witch hunts carried out. Entirely modern phenomena interpreted and processed through the available repertoire of images and forms – be they religious, pseudo-scientific or mythical in origin.*



If there is a War against Women it is not just the result of atavistic traditions that exist in 'Third World' contexts. Rather even the most cultural and religious phenomena, the most traditional of practices have taken on entirely modern manifestations

*Why women?* Ironically it is during the recent expansion of global capitalism that women have broken through into the international arenas, pursuing legal reforms that offer ways of ensuring women's human rights, and pushing for gender justice and equity in national policy-making. This has sharpened the contradictions: legal and policy gains are reacted to, and culture is deployed in an effort to justify practices that will reverse transformation and set back legal and policy advances that have placed some African nations ahead of many Western countries in policy. African women have occupied their rightful place on the international stage of the world. Instead of being proud to forge ahead in the community of nations, our patriarchs cringe and invoke outmoded notions of authenticity. We see this in South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Kenya. Today, President Moi opened a gathering of East African women parliamentarians by cautioning them that they would not get what they want because of their little minds.

Finally let me say that there is nothing specifically African in this. Men the world over react to the experience of existential, political and economic dilemma by exercising power over women and children. Honour becomes a life and death matter to the emasculated patriarch. Men stripped of genuinely honorable and productive lives construe the women they live with in equally reduced terms and use them accordingly. Women become reduced to the only currency they feel they can still lay claim to, the badges that men wear to proclaim their lost and shattered identities. The women they live with become the ultimate sacrifice to the Gods for their failure.

It is up to us to resist this, to end the sacrifice of women on the altars of tradition. Speaking as we have all done here today is only a first step – an important but small step on a long and arduous road. These testimonies must not be given in vain. They must be publicised, used to inspire more organised resistance to the tyranny of patriarchal culture. They must be used to educate ourselves, other women, the men we live amongst and all our children. These atrocities must be stopped for all time.



*The caged bird sings  
 with a fearful trill  
 of things unknown  
 but longed for still  
 and her tune is heard  
 on the distant hill  
 for the caged bird  
 sings of freedom*  
*a caged bird stands  
 on the grave of dreams  
 her shadow shouts  
 on a nightmare scream  
 her wings are clipped  
 and her feet are tied  
 so she opens her throat  
 to sing*

## A brutal, privatised, hidden horror



*Testimony on Dowry Violence  
 Gangamma, India*

*I am Gangamma. I come from a small village called Byranahalli, near the city of Bangalore in the south of India.*

*I am here to tell you the story of my daughter Shobha, who was just 21 when she died on October 10, 1999 - a victim of greed, a victim of the dreaded practice called dowry.*

*According to her husband and his family, she committed suicide by hanging herself. But we know that her husband and his family brutally murdered her.*

*During her marriage of barely three months, in which Shobha stayed in her marital home for only 20 days, she was sent back to us five times with demands for more dowry. Each time she went back to her marital home, we pleaded for time, time that we so badly needed to arrange for the money. But time was obviously not on our side.*



## Retracing the Violence of Dowry

The violence of dowry as a *practice* is today being silenced by an ominous normalcy; a normalcy that has lent to it certain legitimacy. Like the amorality that accompanies *corruption*, dowry too as a practice is publicly condemned but privately condoned; a subject of moral outrage only when the girl's family finally collapses under the weight of incessant demands for more money, jewellery, property...more material goods, or when it finally consumes and destroys its ultimate victim – the wife.

Today even *deaths by dowry* are gaining a frightening normalcy. Not a single day passes without the reported death of a woman, in the newspaper – in any part of the country. Death by burning, poisoning, hanging...death by suicide or murder...It is as if women have been rendered redundant.

Why is it that despite the all pervading influence of the women's movements, of women's growing self assertion and recognition of self worth, despite their growing independence, despite the reforms in laws and creation of state sponsored structures like anti-dowry cells...despite, despite, despite....dowry continues to relentlessly consume the lives of young married women? How and why have women's lives become so cheap, so expendable, so devalued...

*Early one morning in October 1999, her father-in-law called to say that Shobha was refusing to eat. She is insisting on returning to you, he said, so her husband had to drag her into a room and lock her up. He asked us to come over immediately. We promised to go there that evening to console Shobha.*

*At 12 noon that day the phone rang again. Knowing for sure that it had to be news of Shobha I picked up the receiver and asked, is Shobha okay now? Back came the cold reply, Shobha's story is over. Come immediately. My mind went absolutely blank. Somehow, we got to Shobha's house. On seeing my young daughter, laid out on a bed, dead, I collapsed. On recovering I took a closer look at my daughter's body. I noticed that her otherwise fair self had turned a few shades darker. On her neck were marks of strangulation. Her cheeks bore witness to the physical violence she had been subjected to. Finger impressions of the slaps she received were visibly present. Her ankles bore blood-clotted wounds as though her feet had been bound together. The bed was strewn with pieces of broken glass bangles. All a testimony of brutal, privatised and hidden violence.*

*But as all such deaths are made out to be, in the case of Shobha too, they told me that she hanged herself from a ceiling fan.*

*The neighbours told us that they heard loud voices and shouting at 2 a.m. that morning.*

*There is more than enough proof that my daughter was murdered in cold-blood. I am not referring only to the evidence found on the day of her death but to the three months of marriage during which she was tortured both mentally and physically to the point of breakdown.*

*To present the whole cycle of violence, the whole picture, I will have to tell you how this marriage came about.*

*It is by sheer chance that Ravish the owner of a drug store saw Shobha one day in the market place. Now, Shobha was doing a two-year computer course at that time. Impressed with her beauty and grace, he made inquiries and word got around that he was interested in marrying her. His elder brother told this to us, and this marked the beginning of a series of meetings between them and us. During our discussions, the prospective bridegroom's family suggested that we conduct the wedding in the same manner in which we had conducted our elder daughter's. They insisted that 350gms of gold jewellery be given to our daughter and for the bride-groom they demanded 70gms of gold, Rupees 50,000 for the purchase of clothes and a piece of farmland. Besides these demands, they demanded that we pay the expenses of conducting the wedding. Because of all these demands we were forced to sell five acres of our agricultural land.*

*In the meanwhile, Ravish was convinced that he wanted to marry Shobha. He spared no effort in trying to win her trust. He called her regularly to convince her not to change her mind. Everyone said that he was a good man.*

*As the marriage neared, the groom and his family started getting restless. After the engagement they began to assert their power. Demands of all kinds were now put forth. They demanded that the wedding be held at the most expensive marriage hall, that an orchestra should play, and they specified the menu and wanted exotic food.*

*We met all their demands and the wedding was conducted with great pomp and splendor. The glamour of the wedding and the excitement had not yet died down, when harsh reality descended upon us.*

Dowry in its present form is a sharp departure from its earlier form of *streedhan* or *bride price* that existed in earlier pastoral communities and even today exists in certain *adivasi* societies. Both these customs acknowledged the value and worth of a woman - her labour power within the home and her role in the community. *Streedhan*, or the wealth of woman, was a gift given by the parents to their daughter at the time of her marriage for her own use. *Bride price*, on the other hand, was paid by the husband's family to the girl's family to compensate for her loss in the parental home. The forces of development and changes in economic relationship began to alter the face of these customs.

For development brought with it a worldview that fragmented the notion and practice of life as a whole where the *public* and the *private* spheres were complementary and interdependent. A divide in the notions of work accompanied the forced divide between the two worlds, too. All work done in the world of the public had *value* that could be directly linked to *productivity* and *profits* - the key words in the modern market economy. The *work* of the women in the personal private world had no such direct use value. At best the home and house, reduced to the nuclear family, could only become the site for the cultivation of values needed to sustain the new civilisational model built around the individual; values of an *enlightened self interest*, values of competition and aggression needed to survive in a Darwinian world of the strong and the powerful.



Market relations therefore forced a divide between the two worlds - where all that was *public* and therefore at a premium was market, money, man and management while home, household, women and the labour that went with it - cooking, cleaning, caring for children - became *personal* and *private* and therefore devalued.

The devaluation of the home and household to which the woman was central automatically precipitated a devaluation of the woman and her role itself. Once an asset to the home and therefore the community, she became a burden. Dowry replaced *streedhan* and *bride price* as a compensation and bribe to bolster the value of a commodity with little market value.

Any and all attempts to respond to the viciousness of dowry cannot overlook or negate the pervasive power of an increasingly consumerist ethic that is subsuming modern life and living.

And this is the reason why we have not been able to counter and contain vicious violence that has gained epidemic proportions. Perhaps because we have been content only with responding to the overt violence without sufficiently questioning the roots of dowry itself. Dowry that has been seen merely as an antiquated custom at best or a social problem at worst; or which has been reduced to a question of property rights rooted in the unequal power relations between men and women. We appear to have totally failed to contextualise it in the mushrooming materialism nurtured by a consumerist culture, nourished by a media industry that is spawning in its wake hitherto unfelt wants, gluttonous desires and insatiable need to have more and more at any and at all costs. And here the major cost is borne by the women.

*On the very next day, the husband and his family began demanding that Shobha bring Rupees 300,000 to complete the house that they had stopped constructing for want of money. The husband himself came over and asked us. We begged for time as we were heavily in debt, having just spent on the wedding. But they were impatient. Shobha's husband and his family would beat her and lock her up in her room, without food. They even denied her water to drink. For days they would confine her to the darkness of a closed room. Her husband would torment her all night and in the morning lock her up again before he left for work.*

*We were unaware of all this until they sent Shobha to us with the same demands. She would show us the bruises on her body and we would be overcome with grief.*

*They would call and threaten us saying, if you want your daughter to be treated well you better fulfill our demands. All we could do was plead for time. We did not want to send Shobha back to them, but she insisted on returning and gave us courage by promising that nothing would happen to her.*

*A week before her death, they sent her to us, warning her not to return without the money. For them it was now or never. We were helpless and again appealed to the humanity in them, asking for time. Shobha went back to her husband with the hope that things would change. We allowed her to return to them not in the least thinking that we were sending her into a death trap.*

*Two days later she died. They bound her feet together, beat her unconscious and hanged her body to make it appear that she had committed suicide.*

*Shobha had been killed because we could not give the money that they had demanded. We rushed to the police and reported the matter, sure that the police would apprehend the perpetrators. But to our utter shock the police received our complaint with indifference and unconcern.*

*One year and four months have passed...yet the wrong doers who did Shobha to death are at large, in hiding. The police express their inability to find them. For the police the death of a woman is just another UDR (Unnatural Death Registered), another file. Whose life is it anyway?*



No form of violence against women is so directly linked to the economic structures as the demand for dowry - a form of violence that will only escalate with the new economic policies and the liberalisation measures that consecrate the ethic of consumerism and commodification, whose logic it is to draw every realm of human experience and relationship into the market.

*And in the marriage market the devaluation of the woman is complete - her only worth is in the material goods and property she carries with her into the marital home. Once she outlives her value she becomes reduced to an object that can be disposed of or destroyed.*

And as this violence deepens and grows, listen, while the victim of dowry speaks. She speaks of a violence woven into the matrix of everyday living; of a *fear constantly fragmenting the familiar*; of a hope that helplessly hovers over the abyss of frustration; of a violator who is no stranger but a partner and protector who shares and cares; of a violence done to her within the safety and security of her own home.

Listen while she speaks, for she also speaks of isolation and alienation. Isolation from the security of her parental home that ceases to be responsible for her well-being once she is married; alienated from a community that in the modern urban world has been fragmented into a faceless and anonymous public that unfeelingly reserves its right to be non-interfering in the private and personal lives of its fellow citizens; a public that receives her pain with indifference at best or hostility at worst, for it has ceased to be a collective conscience - a task that has been handed over to the safekeeping of the state. She speaks also of the state that as her *protector* has failed to deliver any *justice*, for it is itself guilty of the crime perpetrated by its own worldview that has legitimised the devaluation of women.

Listen while she speaks. For she speaks of a cycle of violence that can only return to deny her, denigrate her and then finally destroy her.

**Source:** Prepublication of the Speaking Tree Womenspeak, Court of Women on Crimes Against Women Related to the Violence of Development, Asian Women's Human Rights Council and Vimochana, January 1995, Bangalore, India.

*No form of violence against women is so directly linked to the economic structures as the demand for dowry - a form of violence that will only escalate with the new economic policies and the liberalisation measures that consecrate the ethic of consumerism and commodification, whose logic it is to draw every realm of human experience and relationship into the market*





## Women's bodies as a battlefield



### *Testimony on Female Genital Mutilation*

*Presented by Ragia Omran, Egypt, on behalf of Amira and Nora: the two absent testifiers*

*Lullaby.*

*Let nations rage.*

*Let nations fall.*

*The shadow of the crib makes an  
enormous cage  
upon the wall.*

Elizabeth Bishop

*Because Amira cannot be with us today to present her testimony herself, I wish to take the opportunity of the World Court of Women, witnessed by so many women from all over the world, to tell her story as she would have told it, had she been with us.*

*My name is Amira. I am 11 years old and my friend Nora was only 10.*

*We were two young Egyptian girls who had barely started our lives. We spent our days between going to school, playing with our friends in our neighbourhood and helping our mothers in the household. It was the time when we knew that there is this part of our body, which has to be removed so that we develop into proper women and wives, as we should. They told us it is done so that we are clean and pretty, that we develop fast into young women, and so that our husbands are happy with us when we get married. We had heard from our older friends that it is also done to secure that the girl does not do wrong before she is married. We were frightened. There would be a lot of pain. There would be a lot of blood. However, there will be candy, a new dress, and a whole chicken for lunch. After that we shall no longer be children and we shall not be able to play as we used to, but then we shall be treated as potential young women, bear the responsibilities of young women and have the charm of young women. On the day of our circumcision our mothers disagreed as to where to circumcise us. Nora's mother insisted on asking the barber to circumcise me like everybody else. She knew the man and he had been doing this for the past 10 years and had a good reputation for it. My mother refused on going to the barber and insisted to go to a doctor. The minister of health, she said, has ordered circumcision to be done in hospitals and has prohibited lay people from cutting into our bodies; we should go to the hospital, and there a professional doctor will do the job and charge us only 10 pounds. The minister is a doctor himself, my mother said, and his orders are to protect girls from the hazards of ignorant circumcision.*

*I tried to convince Nora to tell her mother to come with us to the doctor but Nora was frightened to talk to her mother who had made up her mind. I was taken to the doctor to have a professional painless circumcision and Nora went to the barber. We had wanted to go together, to be together at the times of pain and to enjoy together the festivities that would follow.*

*Nora and Amira were soon to meet again. Both were taken to where the **extra** parts of their bodies would be removed. Amira and Nora are both **absent** today from this event not only because they do not know about Cape Town and even had they known they would not have had the access, but because both of them are dead. Knife and scalpel went through their bodies removing what barber and doctor considered **unnecessary** parts. Amira bled to death in the hospital and Nora's respiration stopped after an injection the barber gave her to stop her pains. **Amira and Nora did not die of malpractice. They died in a premeditated act of violence. No fair trial for their violators will take place except in a court attended and ruled by women and men who have decided once and for all to struggle against violence based on gender. A fair trial for Amira and Nora's case should convict several violators:***

### **Female Circumcision: Barbaric, Immoral or Illegal?**

*Although documentation and statistical information are difficult to find, it is believed that female circumcision has been practiced for nearly 2,500 years, prior to either Islam or Christianity. The cultural and geographical origins of the practice are unknown. The incidence is, however, so geographically dispersed and occurs among such a variety of cultures that it is reasonable to assume that the practice arose independently among different groups of people. It is likely that female circumcision, as with male circumcision, was initially part of the traditional puberty rites, in which young women and men were introduced into the adult world - a *rite of passage*.*

Various forms of female circumcision were practiced in Europe and, from about 1890 to the late 1930s, in the United States. The West implemented circumcision as a surgical remedy for female masturbation (considered to be the cause of insanity) and to control female sexuality. This was a result of the belief that a *woman's entire psychology was governed by her sex organs*. In fact, some Western surgeons claimed to have invented the procedure.




It continues to be practised today in over forty countries. It extends across the African continent including twenty-six countries, as well as the southern part of the Arab Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. Among the countries with the highest incidence of female circumcision are Somalia, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Nine out of ten females in Somalia and Sudan are infibulated. It is estimated that in 1982, there were 74 million circumcised females in Africa alone.

The ritual is performed almost entirely by women, generally local midwives or elderly women in the villages. Although not common, the operations sometimes are performed by medical personnel in health clinics or hospitals. The age at which girls are circumcised varies both geographically and ethnically. In Mauritania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, the operation is performed on newborns, or within the first few weeks following birth. In Kenya and Tanzania, young women are excised on their wedding night. And in Mali, the operation may be performed on married women after they have had their first child. However, the practice most often occurs on young girls between the ages of three and eight years, or before a girl's first menstruation. The age of girls presently being circumcised has been dropping in a number of countries.

A telling comparison to female circumcision in Africa might be cosmetic surgery in the United States. What would a Sudanese woman think if she were to hear about the women of America who have their ribs removed to appear thinner, their faces lifted to appear younger, and their noses made smaller and breasts made larger, all in the desire to become more attractive? How, in turn, would these American women feel if they were told that their actions were barbaric or immoral, or if they were prohibited by law to have such operations?

*A whole patriarchal community that has taken the decision to excise their bodies in order to ensure control over women's bodies and their lives, out of fear of the freedom, sexuality and power women gain when they realise that they are equal beings, capable of great things and entitled to their bodies, complete and healthy. A medical institution, of which the Egyptian minister of health is a member, that broke its oath and decided to increase its income at the expense of women's bodily integrity and lives. A government that was scared to contradict the religious authorities after the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) held in Cairo, that traded their bodies and lives in exchange for its peace of mind and a cheap political compromise. A fundamentalist religious authority that chose women's bodies as a battlefield, a no-man's land, to prove to the government, to the people and to you in the international community that they have the upper hand in making decisions in Egypt.*

*And what about the mothers, Amira's and Nora's and mothers of thousands of Egyptian girls who are pushed into this act of mutilating their bodies? Ninety percent of Egyptian women have been mutilated, pushed into it by their families' and husbands' convictions that this thing must be done. Nora and Amira had obeyed their parents in full trust that they would not harm them. Are they violators or are they victims of the social pressure that makes FGM a virtue and its abandonment a sin, of a political system that thrives on unequal power relations between sexes, between classes, between races, a patriarchy that thrives on our fates and that uses this and other forms of violence as a powerful tool to maintain our oppression and retain its control?*



*Gone is the rainbow  
from the sky,  
gone is the bird  
that can't fly,...*

## Dying was better than living in the shrine

*Testimony of a Former Trokosi Slave  
Mercy Senahe, Ghana, West Africa*




*Fellow testifiers,  
women in the liberation struggle,  
freedom fighters and human rights advocates,*

*I am glad to be with you today to tell you what I have gone through in the world of men and to also learn what you have gone through and together seek means of making today's world a safe place for both sexes.*

*You need no one to tell you that I have been rendered disabled, perhaps for the rest of my life. This is because I can not read and write like most of you here, and as much as I would like to communicate to you directly, I can't because I was prevented from going to school as a result of the practice of Trokosi slavery, which I suffered.*

*I know most of you would be hearing the name Trokosi for the first time in your lives. It is a practice found in the southeastern part of Ghana in which young virgin girls are forced into servitude in shrine to atone for the alleged crimes of relations. In most cases the poor girls do not even know the person who committed the alleged crime.*





...gone is a love  
i should have tried.  
people i know  
are on my side....

## Trokosi Slavery

Trokosi is made of two words, *Tro* (fetish) and *Kosi* (female slave). The word Trokosi therefore means *slave of the fetish*. The practice of Trokosi, which started as far back as the 17th century, allows for young virgins to be sent into fetish shrines in order to serve and atone for the alleged crimes of relations. When a family member commits an offence against another person, the aggrieved party reports to the shrine and curses. It is believed that the person who committed the offence would suffer calamities until a young virgin in his or her family is sent to serve in a Trokosi shrine.

In the shrine the poor innocent girl becomes the property of the priest. She is forced to work on the priest's farm for no salary or wage. She must find her own meals and clothing and in most cases, must sleep with the priest as soon as she reaches puberty or when the priest thinks she is ripe enough for sex.

The child that the poor Trokosi girl bears as a result of the rape they suffer from the priest becomes her burden. She must find food and clothing for the child even though she does not have the means to do so.

*My dear friends, many women have died in the slave practice of Trokosi and many more have been maimed mentally, spiritually and physically; many more unsuspecting and poor girls and women will suffer to death if we do not stand against this practice and stop it now.*

*Imagine yourself at the age of nine, when you need the love and care of your parents most. Imagine you are forced out of your home and sent over 500 kilometres away where you are subjected to daily physical and mental torture for well over 12 years. That was what happened to me.*

*I was only nine and in primary class two when my parents took me into a Trokosi fetish shrine. The reason being that someone in my family, who I do not even know, had stolen a pair of gold earrings. For that crime, I was selected as the person to go and slave away my life in atonement.*

*Now, my good friends, let me tell you what I went through as a Trokosi fetish slave for 12 years.*

*It was an early morning and I was preparing to go to school when my mother told me that I would be traveling with them to an uncle in a nearby village for a festival. I wanted to go to school with the other children and not to a festival, so I said I would not go. My grandmother brandished a long stick and warned that if I did not go I would be beaten, so I gave in. I was whisked away to the village of Mafi Avakpedome in the North Tongu District of the Volta Region of Ghana.*

*After two weeks with me in the shrine village, my parents left at dawn when I was still in bed. I woke to meet the wicked, old fetish priest who I was going to serve. Since that morning I had not known peace, rest, good food or love for 12 years.*



*It was then I was told that my elder sister had served as a slave in the same shrine but died of torture and that I was the replacement for the same crime for which my sister had served and died.*

*At the tender age of nine, I had to wake up at 5:00 a.m., fetch water from a stream about 5 kilometres away from the shrine compound, sweep the compound and proceed to the farm to work for the priest on an empty stomach. To stay alive, I had to eat fresh pepper or palm kernel nuts and drink a lot of water to keep going.*

*I worked on the priest's farm from dawn to dusk, after which I had to look for my own food, which was almost non-existent. I had to beg for food in the nearby villages at times or work as a farm hand to be able to raise some money for food.*

*The most painful experience for me in the shrine was when the priest, who was about 40 years old, raped me when I was only 11. He came to me in the night and tried to rape me but I fought and cried. He beat me but he could not have his way.*

*A week later he returned, but this time he overpowered me and raped me mercilessly. I was all torn inside and had to be helped by some older women who had gone through the same ordeal. They gave me hot water in a chamber pot each morning and asked me to sit on it to heal the cut I had sustained in the rape.*

*After about a month, it became a regular ordeal, but I dared not resist because I would be beaten mercilessly. In fact, I never had my menses as a young girl before I realised that I was pregnant and had my first child in slavery at the age of 13. This worsened my plight because now I had to look for food for the baby and myself and still work for the priest.*

*It was only a matter of time that the second pregnancy came since there was no family planning education in the shrine. After the second child, the burden became too much so I escaped to my parents hoping that they would give me some comfort, but I met the rudest shock of my life. My parents were angry and sent me back to the shrine the next day.*

*My ordeal continued. At one point, I thought I was going to die because I was so tired of living and prayed that death should come to me. The rape continued and I had four children in the shrine before I finally decided, even though they said if I leave the shrine I would die, to leave and die anyway; dying was better than living in the shrine.*



*...I'm fed up  
with swimming against  
the tide,  
no longer  
am i going to hide....*

## *Ghana*


So far, a total of 2,800 women and girls (their children not included) have been liberated. However, there are about 2,200 women and girls still in bondage in shrines in Ghana alone.

The government of Ghana in August 1998 passed a law abolishing the practice after International Needs Ghana, the NGO in the forefront of fighting the practice, and allied agencies had advocated and educated the public for more than seven years.

Even though there is presently a law in Ghana that says the practice of Trokosi is a criminal offence, no one has been prosecuted even though the practice still goes on.

A traditionalist group calling itself Afrikania Mission fiercely opposes change with the argument that Trokosi is part of their culture and therefore that those fighting to stop the practice want to destroy the Ghanaian culture. They have threatened the lives of human rights activists, including Vincent Azumah, who has put together a group of former Trokosi slaves (Survivors For Change) to advocate for the enforcement of the law and the end of all practices that infringe on the rights of women.





*...break the shackles  
from your heart,  
arise with the sun  
for a brand new start,*

*bring back  
the rainbow to the sky,  
bring back  
the bird than can fly*

Two leading members of Survivors For Change are Mercy Senahe, who testified at the World Court of Women in Cape Town, South Africa, March 5-9, 2001 and Juliana Dogbadzi, the 1999 Reebok International Human Rights Award Winner. (Juliana was the first young woman Vincent Azumah adopted and trained to do advocacy on Trokosi. The work attracted the award).

### *Togo and Benin*

Unlike Ghana, Togo and Benin have done little or nothing at all to stop the practice of Trokosi. It is estimated that the women in Trokosi bondage in Togo and Benin is about three times the number in Ghana. It is feared that if Togo and Benin do not pass laws to stop the practice, practitioners in Ghana would carry girls across the borders into shrines in those countries.

**Source:** Background note prepared by Vincent Azumah and Juliana Dogbadzi, Ghana for a proposed Court of Women on Trokosi.



*I sent messages to my parents threatening that if they do not come to ask the priest to let me go I would leave and they would see me no more. In fear that they would have to send another girl into the shrine if I escaped, they decided to respond to my threat. Just about the same time, officials of International Needs Ghana, a human rights NGO, were visiting the shrine in a bid to talk to the priest into releasing us.*

*The priest finally agreed after receiving cash and other items from them to let us go and learn various vocations from International Needs. Together with my children we left the shrine to International Needs where I was trained in dressmaking.*

*I have also vowed that so long as I live I will continue to fight against the practice of Trokosi and other discriminatory practices, customs and traditions against women.*

*Presently, even though International Needs has liberated 2,800 of us, there are about 2,400 women and girls slaving away their lives in shrines in Ghana.*

*With the help of Mr. Vincent Azumah, who has trained a number of us to do advocacy, we have formed a movement called Survivors for Change. This group is made up of formerly abused women who are seeking change and redress.*

*We hope to carry the message of change everywhere and also get help to rehabilitate abused women like myself and all others in my country and beyond.*

*I would therefore be happy if you would join me to ask the newly elected government of Ghana to enforce the law that has been passed against Trokosi slavery and female ritual servitude.*

*We also need support for our baby NGO, Survivors for Change, to enable us launch a full-scale advocacy programme against gender apartheid in Ghana and at least in the West African sub-region.*

*Thank you and may God give us the courage and power to continue to resist gender apartheid worldwide until we achieve total equality and peace.*

*Tremors of your network  
Cause kings to disappear.  
Your open mouth in anger  
makes nations bow in fear.  
Your bombs can change the seasons,  
obliterate the spring.  
What more do you long for?  
Why are you suffering?...*

## Changing the destiny of my daughter



*Testimony on Fundamentalism  
Nooria Shafiq, Afghanistan*

*My name is Nooria Shafiq. I was living with my father, mother and six brothers and sisters. Our family was very poor, and every one of us spent days tailoring and embroidering. Perhaps I was about fifteen when they got me married to one of my cousins. During the war of resistance against the Russians, I lost my only brother. In a single day, during bombardment, they carried six dead bodies out of our home and three children were murdered in another house. I have seen the cutting of limbs and tens of wounded people. Our village was completely burnt. After that, my mother got mental problems, and father tried to get all his daughters married as soon as possible because we were a burden on our poor and sick parents. I spent the most horrible days of my life with my husband's family without enjoying a bit of it. There I was supposed to do all household chores and embroidering side by side. I was barren for many years, and that is why I was a subject of their scorn and glare most of the time. From the beginning of my marriage, my husband was on the warfront - first with the Russians and then when Jihadi fundamentalist bands seized our village. He couldn't return home. In those years, many times, I heard the news of his arrest, injury and even death. After a month, one day, we were anticipating his return. I was especially very happy to give the good news that I was two months pregnant. One of our relatives came and brought the news that he had been murdered and along with some other men their dead bodies had been set on fire.*



... You control the human lives  
in Rome and Timbuktu.  
Lonely nomads wandering  
owe Telstar to you.  
Seas shift at your bidding,  
your mushrooms fill the sky.  
Why are you unhappy?  
Why do your children cry?

## The Algebra of Infinite Justice

Arundhati Roy

In the aftermath of the unconscionable September 11 suicide attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, an American newscaster said: *Good and Evil rarely manifest themselves as clearly as they did last Tuesday. People who we don't know, massacred people who we do. And they did so with contemptuous glee.* Then he broke down and wept.

Here's the rub: America is at war against people it doesn't know (because they don't appear much on TV). Before it has properly identified or even begun to comprehend the nature of its enemy, the US government has, in a rush of publicity and embarrassing rhetoric, cobbled together an *International Coalition Against Terror*, mobilised its army, its airforce, its navy and its media, and committed them to battle.

The trouble is that once America goes off to war, it can't very well return without having fought one. If it doesn't find its enemy, for the sake of the enraged folks back home, it will have to manufacture one. Once war begins, it will develop a momentum, a logic and a justification of its own, and we'll lose sight of why it's being fought in the first place.

*I did not believe that my mother-in-law didn't allow me even to cry. She asked me to finish the weaving of carpet by the next day, because that was when they would bring the dead bodies. I continued my job and didn't shed a drop of tear. Actually, I couldn't understand what was going on. I ran out of the house just like a crazy dog and was not talking with anyone. Some people saw me in that condition and brought me back.*

*We went to the mosque at four o'clock in the morning and I saw the burnt body of my husband. Actually, I couldn't recognise him because flesh was missing from many parts of his body.*

*Four years have passed since the death of my husband and perhaps I have accepted to be in this world just for my daughter who is my only hope and motivation in my life. The situation that I have gone through in the last four years might be the bitterest days of my life. Not only my family but also our whole village was mournful. Our neighbour's home was burnt and charred to ashes during the fighting with Taliban, and seven people died on the spot. After the death of my husband, my uncle became my guardian but lost his life by getting tortured by the Taliban on the excuse of keeping weapons. Taliban by force sent my first cousin to the war front and brought his dead body after some days. Many times I was beaten and insulted by them for not having a *Marham* (a close male relative). More painful than all that was the abduction of my two nephews, whose whereabouts are still unknown.*



*They kneel alone in terror  
 with dread in every glance.  
 Their nights are threatened daily  
 by a grim inheritance.  
 You dwell in whitened castles  
 With deep and poisoned moats  
 And cannot hear the curses  
 Which fill your children's throats.*

- Maya Angelou

*Facing all those sorrows was not possible for me,  
 especially when I wanted a better life for my daughter.  
 More important than all that was the non-existent  
 education system there. I didn't want my daughter  
 to follow my footsteps and have nothing else in her  
 life except miseries. Perhaps good education might  
 help to rescue others and her out of the despair.*

*This was the only desire of my life and that's why I  
 came to Pakistan with the help of my sisters at  
 RAWA. For the time being, I work in one of RAWA's  
 orphanages and am a student of one of the literacy  
 courses. I love my sisters at RAWA more than  
 anyone else because they have rescued me and  
 changed the destiny of my daughter.*

What we're witnessing here is the spectacle of the world's  
 most powerful country, reaching reflexively, angrily, for  
 an old instinct to fight a new kind of war. Suddenly, when  
 it comes to defending itself, America's streamlined warships,  
 its Cruise missiles and F-16 jets look like obsolete,  
 lumbering things. As deterrence, its arsenal of nuclear  
 bombs is no longer worth its weight in scrap. *Box-cutters,  
 penknives, and cold anger are the weapons with which the  
 wars of the new century will be waged. Anger is the lock pick.  
 It slips through customs unnoticed. Doesn't show up in baggage  
 checks.*

Who is America fighting? On September 20, the FBI said  
 that it had doubts about the identities of some of the  
 hijackers. On the same day, President George W. Bush  
 said: *We know exactly who these people are and which  
 governments are supporting them.* It sounds as though the  
 President knows something that the FBI and the American  
 public don't.

In his September 20 address to the US Congress, President  
 Bush called the enemies of America *Enemies of Freedom*,  
*Americans are asking why do they hate us?* he said. *They hate  
 our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech,  
 our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other.*  
 People are being asked to make two leaps of faith here.  
 First, to assume that The Enemy is who the US  
 government says it is, even though it has no substantial  
 evidence to support that claim. And second, to assume  
 that the enemy's motives are what the US government  
 says they are, and there's nothing to support that either.

For strategic, military and economic reasons, it is vital for  
 the US government to persuade the American public that  
 America's commitment to freedom and democracy and  
 the American Way of Life is under attack. In the current  
 atmosphere of grief, outrage and anger, it's an easy notion  
 to peddle. However, if that were true, it's reasonable to  
 wonder why the symbols of America's economic and  
 military dominance—the World Trade Center and the  
 Pentagon – were chosen as the targets of the attacks. Why  
 not the Statue of Liberty? *Could it be that the stygian anger  
 that led to the attacks has its taproot not in American freedom  
 and democracy, but in the US government's record of  
 commitment and support to exactly the opposite things – to  
 military and economic terrorism, insurgency, military  
 dictatorship, religious bigotry and unimaginable genocide  
 (outside America)?*



*It's almost as though  
they could not scale  
down the enormity of  
their rage to anything  
smaller than their deeds*

It must be hard for ordinary Americans so recently bereaved to look up at the world with their eyes full of tears and encounter what might appear to them to be indifference. It isn't indifference. It's just augury. An absence of surprise. The tired wisdom of knowing that what goes around, eventually comes around. American people ought to know that it is not them, but their government's policies that are so hated. They can't possibly doubt that they themselves, their extraordinary musicians, their writers, their actors, their spectacular sportsmen and their cinema, are universally welcomed. All of us have been moved by the courage and grace shown by firefighters, rescue workers and ordinary office-goers in the days and weeks that followed the attacks.

*America's grief at what happened has been immense and immensely public. It would be grotesque to expect it to calibrate or modulate its anguish. However, it will be a pity if, instead of using this as an opportunity to try and understand why September 11 happened, Americans use it as an opportunity to usurp the whole world's sorrow to mourn and avenge only their own. Because then it falls to the rest of us to ask the hard questions and say the harsh things. And for our pains, for our bad timing, we will be disliked, ignored and perhaps eventually silenced.*

The world will probably never know what motivated those particular hijackers who flew planes into those particular American buildings. They were not glory boys. They left no suicide notes, no political messages, no organisation has claimed credit for the attacks. All we know is that their belief in what they were doing outstripped the natural human instinct for survival or any desire to be remembered. *It's almost as though they could not scale down the enormity of their rage to anything smaller than their deeds.* And what they did has blown a hole in the world as we know it. In the absence of information, politicians, political commentators, writers (like myself) will invest the act with their own politics, with their own interpretations. This speculation, this analysis of the political climate in which the attacks took place, can only be a good thing.

But war is looming large. Whatever remains to be said, must be said quickly.

Before America places itself at the helm of the *International Coalition against Terror*, before it invites (and coerces) countries to actively participate in its almost godlike mission – *Operation Infinite Justice* – it would help if some small clarifications are made. For example, Infinite Justice for whom? Is this America's War against Terror in America or against Terror in general? What exactly is being avenged here? Is it the tragic loss of almost 7,000 lives, the gutting of 5 million square feet of office space in Manhattan, the destruction of a section of the Pentagon, the loss of several hundreds of thousands of jobs, the bankruptcy of some airline companies and the dip in the New York Stock Exchange? Or is it more than that?

In 1996, Madeleine Albright, then US Secretary of State, was asked on national television what she felt about the fact that 5,00,000 Iraqi children had died as a result of US economic sanctions. She replied that it was *a very hard choice*, but that all things considered, *we think the price is worth it*. Madeleine Albright never lost her job for saying this. She continued to travel the world representing the views and aspirations of the US government. More pertinently, the sanctions against Iraq remain in place. Children continue to die.

So here we have it. The equivocating distinction between civilisation and savagery, between the *massacre of innocent people* or, if you like, *a clash of civilisations* and *collateral damage*. The sophistry and fastidious Algebra of Infinite Justice. How many dead Iraqis will it take to make the world a better place? How many dead Afghans for every dead American? How many dead women and children for every dead man? How many dead mujahideen for each dead investment banker?

As we watch mesmerized, Operation Infinite Justice unfolds on TV monitors across the world. A coalition of the world's superpowers is closing in on Afghanistan, one of the poorest, most ravaged, war-torn countries in the world, whose ruling Taliban government is sheltering Osama bin Laden, the man being held responsible for the September 11 attacks.

The only thing in Afghanistan that could possibly count as collateral value is its citizenry. (Among them, half a million maimed orphans. There are accounts of hobbling stampedes that occur when artificial limbs are airdropped into remote, inaccessible villages.) Afghanistan's economy is in a shambles. In fact, the problem for an invading army is that Afghanistan has no conventional coordinates or signposts to plot on a military map – no big cities, no highways, no industrial complexes, no water treatment plants. Farms have been turned into mass graves. The countryside is littered with land-mines – 10 million is the most recent estimate. The American army would first have to clear the mines and build roads in order to take its soldiers in.

Fearing an attack from America, one million citizens have fled from their homes and arrived at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. As supplies run out – food and aid agencies have been asked to leave – the BBC reports that one of the worst humanitarian disasters of recent times has begun to unfold. Witness the Infinite Justice of the new century. Civilians starving to death, while they're waiting to be killed.

By contributing to the killing of Afghan civilians, the US government will only end up helping the Taliban cause.



In America there has been rough talk of “bombing Afghanistan back to the stone age”. Someone please break the news that Afghanistan is already there. And if it’s any consolation, America played no small part in helping it on its way. The American people may be a little fuzzy about where exactly Afghanistan is (we hear reports that there’s a run on maps of Afghanistan), but the US government and Afghanistan are old friends. In 1979, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the CIA and Pakistan’s ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) launched the largest covert operation in the history of the CIA. Their purpose was to harness the energy of Afghan resistance to the Soviets and expand it into a holy war, an Islamic jihad, which would turn Muslim countries within the Soviet Union against the Communist regime and eventually destabilize it. When it began, it was meant to be the Soviet Union’s Vietnam. It turned out to be much more than that. Over the years, the CIA funded and recruited almost 1,00,000 radical mujahideen from 40 Islamic countries as soldiers for America’s proxy war. The rank and file of the mujahideen were unaware that their jihad was actually being fought on behalf of Uncle Sam. (The irony is that America was equally unaware that it was financing a future war against itself.)

By 1989, after being bloodied by 10 years of relentless conflict, the Russians withdrew, leaving behind a civilization reduced to rubble. Civil war in Afghanistan raged on. The jihad spread to Chechnya, Kosovo and eventually to Kashmir. The CIA continued to pour in money and military equipment, but the overheads had become immense, and more money was needed. The mujahideen ordered farmers to plant opium as ‘revolutionary tax’. The ISI set up hundreds of heroin laboratories across Afghanistan. Within two years of the CIA’s arrival, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland had become the biggest producer of heroin in the world, and the single biggest source on American streets. The annual profits, said to be between 100 and 200 billion dollars, were ploughed back into training and arming militants.

In 1995, the Taliban – then a marginal sect of dangerous, hardline fundamentalists – fought its way to power in Afghanistan. It was funded by the ISI, that old cohort of the CIA, and supported by many political parties in Pakistan. The Taliban unleashed a regime of terror. Its first victims were its own people, particularly women. It closed down girls’ schools, dismissed women from government jobs, enforced Sharia laws in which women deemed to be *immoral* are stoned to death, and widows guilty of being adulterous are buried alive. Given the Taliban government’s human rights track record, it seems unlikely that it will in any way be intimidated or swerved from its purpose by the prospect of war, or the threat to the lives of its civilians.

After all that has happened, can there be anything more ironic than Russia and America joining hands to re-destroy Afghanistan? The question is, *can you destroy destruction?* Dropping more bombs on Afghanistan will only shuffle the rubble, scramble some old graves and disturb the dead.

The desolate landscape of Afghanistan was the burial ground of Soviet Communism and the springboard of a unipolar world dominated by America. *It made the space for neo-capitalism and corporate globalisation, again dominated by America. And now Afghanistan is poised to be the graveyard for the unlikely soldiers who fought and won this war for America.*

And what of America's trusted ally? Pakistan too has suffered enormously. The US government has not been shy of supporting military dictators who have blocked the idea of democracy from taking root in the country. Before the CIA arrived, there was a small rural market for opium in Pakistan. Between 1979 and 1985, the number of heroin addicts grew from zero to one and a half million. There are three million Afghan refugees living in tented camps along the border. Pakistan's economy is crumbling. Sectarian violence, globalisation's Structural Adjustment Programmes and druglords are tearing the country to pieces. Set up to fight the Soviets, the terrorist training centres and madraasas, sown like dragon's teeth across the country, produced fundamentalists with tremendous popular appeal within Pakistan itself. The Taliban, who the Pakistan government has supported, funded and propped up for years, has material and strategic alliances with Pakistan's own political parties. Now the US government is asking (asking?) Pakistan to garrote the pet it has hand-reared in its backyard for so many years. President Musharraf, having pledged his support to the US could well find he has something resembling civil war on his hands.

India, thanks in part to its geography, and in part to the vision of its former leaders, has so far been fortunate enough to be left out of this Great Game. Had it been drawn in it's more than likely that our democracy, such as it is, would not have survived. Today, as some of us watch in horror, the Indian government is furiously gyrating its hips, begging the US to set up its base in India rather than Pakistan. Having had this ringside view of Pakistan's sordid fate, it isn't just odd, it's unthinkable that India should want to do this. Any Third World country with a fragile economy and a complex social base should know by now that to invite a superpower like America in (whether it says it's staying or just passing through) would be like inviting a brick to drop through your windscreen.



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In the media blitz that followed the September 11 events, no mainstream TV station thought it fit to tell the story of America's involvement with Afghanistan. So, to those unfamiliar with the story, the coverage of the attacks could have been moving, disturbing and perhaps to cynics, self-indulgent. However, to those of us who are familiar with Afghanistan's recent history, American television coverage and the rhetoric of the *International Coalition Against Terror* is just plain insulting. America's *free press* like its *free market* has a lot to account for. Operation Infinite Justice is ostensibly being fought to uphold the American Way of Life. It'll probably end up undermining it completely. It will spawn more anger and more terror across the world. For ordinary people in America, it will mean lives lived in a climate of sickening uncertainty: will my child be safe in school? Will there be nerve gas in the subway? A bomb in the cinema hall? Will my love come home tonight? Already CNN is warning people against the possibility of biological warfare – small pox, bubonic plague, anthrax – being waged by innocuous crop duster aircraft. Being picked off a few at a time may end up being worse than being annihilated all at once by a nuclear bomb.

The US government, and no doubt governments all over the world, will use the climate of war as an excuse to curtail civil liberties, deny free speech, lay off workers, harass ethnic and religious minorities, cut back on public spending and divert huge amounts of money to the defence industry.

To what purpose? President George Bush can no more *rid the world of evil-doers* than he can stock it with saints. It's absurd for the US Government to even toy with the notion that it can stamp out terrorism with more violence and oppression. Terrorism is the symptom, not the disease. Terrorism has no country. It's as transnational and global an enterprise as Coke or Pepsi or Nike. At the first sign of trouble, terrorists can pull up stakes and move their *factories* from country to country in search of a better deal. Just like the multinationals.

Terrorism as a phenomenon may never go away. But if it is to be contained, the first step is for America to at least acknowledge that it shares the planet with other nations, with other human beings, who, even if they are not on TV, have loves and griefs and stories and songs and sorrows and, for heaven's sake, rights. Instead, when Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, was asked what he would call a victory in America's New War, he said that if he could convince the world that Americans must be allowed to continue with their way of life, he would consider it a victory.

The September 11 attacks were a monstrous calling card from a world gone horribly wrong. The message may have been written by Osama bin Laden (who knows?) and delivered by his couriers, but it could well have been signed by the ghosts of the victims of America's old wars.

The million killed in Korea, Vietnam and Cambodia, the 17,500 killed when Israel – backed by the US – invaded Lebanon in 1982, the 2,00,000 Iraqis killed in Operation Desert Storm, the thousands of Palestinians who have died fighting Israel's occupation of the West Bank. And the millions who died, in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Haiti, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Dominican republic, Panama, at the hands of all the terrorists, dictators and genocidists who the American government supported, trained, bankrolled and supplied with arms. And this is far from being a comprehensive list. For a country involved in so much warfare and conflict, the American people have been extremely fortunate. The strikes on September 11 were only the second on American soil in over a century. The first was Pearl Harbour. The reprisal for this took a long route, but ended with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This time the world waits with bated breath for the horrors to come.

Someone recently said that if Osama bin Laden didn't exist America would have had to invent him. But, in a way, America did invent him. He was among the jihadis who moved to Afghanistan in 1979 when the CIA commenced operations. Osama bin Laden has the distinction of being created by the CIA and wanted by the FBI. In the course of a fortnight, he has been promoted from Suspect, to Prime suspect, and then, despite the lack of any real evidence, straight up the charts to *being wanted dead or alive*.

From all accounts, it will be impossible to produce evidence (of the sort that would stand scrutiny in a court of law) to link Osama bin Laden to the September 11 attacks. So far, it appears that the most incriminating piece of evidence against him is the fact that he has not condemned them.

From what is known about the location and the living conditions from which Osama bin Laden operates, it's entirely possible that he did not personally plan and carry out the attacks – that he is the inspirational figure, *the CEO of the Holding Company*. The Taliban's response to US demands for the extradition of Osama bin Laden has been uncharacteristically reasonable: Produce the evidence, we'll hand him over. President Bush's response is that the demand is *non-negotiable*.

*The US government, and no doubt governments all over the world, will use the climate of war as an excuse to curtail civil liberties, deny free speech, lay off workers, harass ethnic and religious minorities, cut back on public spending and divert huge amounts of money to the defence industry*



(While talks are on for the extradition of CEOS – can India put in a side-request for the extradition of Warren Anderson of the USA? He was Chairman of Union Carbide, responsible for the Bhopal gas leak that killed 16,000 people in 1984. We have collated the necessary evidence. It's all in the files. Could we have him, please?)

But who is Osama bin Laden really?

Let me rephrase that. What is Osama bin Laden?

He's America's family secret. He is the American President's dark doppelganger. The savage twin of all that purports to be beautiful and civilised. He has been sculpted from the spare rib of a world laid to waste by America's foreign policy: its gunboat diplomacy, its nuclear arsenal, its vulgarly stated policy of *full spectrum dominance*, its chilling disregard for non-American lives, its barbarous military interventions, its support for despotic and dictatorial regimes, its merciless economic agenda that has munched through the economies of poor countries like a cloud of locusts. Its marauding multinationals who are taking over the air we breathe, the ground we stand on, the water we drink, the thoughts we think.

Now that the family secret has been spilled, the twins are blurring into one another and gradually becoming interchangeable. Their guns, bombs, money and drugs have been going around in the loop for a while. (The Stinger missiles that will greet US helicopters were supplied by the CIA. The heroin used by America's drug addicts comes from Afghanistan. The Bush administration recently gave Afghanistan a \$43 million subsidy for a war on drugs.) Now they've even begun to borrow each other's rhetoric. Each refers to the other as the head of the snake. Both invoke God and use the loose millenarian currency of Good and Evil as their terms of reference. Both are engaged in unequivocal political crimes. Both are dangerously armed – one with the nuclear arsenal of the obscenely powerful, the other with the incandescent, destructive power of the utterly hopeless. *The fireball and the ice pick. The bludgeon and the axe. The important thing to keep in mind is that neither is an acceptable alternative to the other.*

President Bush's ultimatum to the people of the world – If you're not with us, you're against us – is a piece of presumptuous arrogance.

*It's not a choice that people want to, need to, or should have to make.*



(Arundathi Roy, is a writer, who has also thrown herself into the Narmada Bachao Andolan, a movement against damming the Narmada river, against big dams and mega development. She was to have spoken during the World Court of Women Against War, For Peace as a Voice of Resistance, but was unfortunately unable to be present. This article was written for two Indian journals, Outlook and Frontline, soon after the attacks in New York and Manhattan on September 11 and has been reproduced here because of its relevance to the issues raised in the testimony of Nooria Shafiq in the larger context of the rise of the Taliban and the role of the American State in the creation of International Terror; particularly after its retaliatory war against Afghanistan, the Taliban and terrorism.)

may be this poem is to say  
 that I like to see  
 we women  
 full-of-we selves walking  
 crushing out  
 with each dancing step  
 the twisted self – negating  
 history  
 we've inherited  
 crushing out  
 with each dancing step

Grace Nichols

And so they curse you



*Testimony on Witch Killing*  
*Esther Rasesemola, South Africa*

*They told me I was a witch.*  
*I don't know what a witch is.*  
*We were taken by the police to the chief.*  
*They took us to the chief's office.*

*They humiliated us all the time and even chased us out of the chief's office. Finally the chief had to find us a place of dwelling because there were people from my community who broke my house and burnt my clothes. We had to travel with my children into the wilderness. However, eventually, we were taken to the chief's office and the headman (Nduna) saw us.*

*Then members of the community came to humiliate us and castigate us and call us names such as witches.*

*After a while the chief's people found us a place of dwelling called Helena. Those people also ostracised us. There in Helena was a mixture of people – white people were also there. However, we did not even have a proper house. It was just wilderness. That's where our chief placed us. Anyway, we lived there. The police protected/guarded us when we were being ostracised from the community.*



*"When the Chiruburu mines closed down and people had no work, witch killing increased. Earlier only the woman who was accused was killed, now entire families are being murdered. There are many more changes. Before the ojha (witch doctor) never used to even say the name of the dayan (witch). It was just told that it was the work of a dayan and a puja (religious rite) was done to exorcise her evil influence. Today specific women are being identified and named. And the women who are named are usually poor and who have no sons or husbands. The reasons could be anything- it could be for her land or it could be just a superstitious belief. A child falls ill and dies- then there is a belief that the woman who you may have fought with has taken revenge. The resistance of us adivasis to disease is also coming down- we fall ill more easily. We need one hospital in every panchayat at least.*

*In August this year in Idhelbid a widow and her daughter were identified as witches, raped and then killed. Today relationships are just dying in the village. You don't see whether she is your aunty or your mother or your sister before doing this violence to her"*

**Loro Jhonko** - A tribal trade union activist from Bihar, India interviewed for the prepublication of *Speaking Tree Womenspeak*, January 1995, Bangalore, India

*We eventually built our own community. All the other women who were called witches were dumped here. I left a lot of assets behind - cows, etc. Where we were dumped there are no facilities, for example running water and electricity, etc. Roads and places such as hospitals are far away. For example, if someone is ill we don't know how to call an ambulance. When walking a distance, I'm convinced that you will eventually even die walking because we don't have transport or roads. Our roads are so much in the wilderness that you will start running from fear. But we tried by all means to come together and make the place habitable - since we had no other choice. We remain without water and electricity in the wilderness. Right now I have a problem with my child. She has passed Grade 10 and I want her to go on with her education.*

*My husband died of a heart attack, so I have to struggle raising the children. Even now we are struggling. When will we ever rest because we seem to be forever in misery?*

*Right now I can't believe that I am in Cape Town because I'm always involved in doing something to try to better our lives. In my community, even though it is new, I'm thought of as trying to make myself better. So therefore they curse you. I don't understand because I'm also trying to better their lives and I don't understand why they ostracise me because they themselves are refugees and were chased from their original communities because they were thought to be witches.*

*There is no other place to live and we can't afford conflicts and fights. There are people who contaminate our water by putting in dead animals, etc, when they know that we are always hungry. We have to drink the water anyway. We have no choice.*

*A new school has been built. However, the teacher is not teaching and therefore the children have to be relocated to surrounding schools.*

*My late husband's family does not like me and wants to kill me. They have been plotting for a long time to do so. They even bought petrol and stuff to do so for no reason except that they think I am a witch. They at one point even confronted my late husband about it. And he denied that I'm a witch and didn't believe them. My child asked them why and they said that I am capable of creating lightning as I please and therefore I am a witch.*



## Witch Hunting and Human Rights for Women: A Double Paradox

*Witch Hunting and killing are as old as time.* Around the world, history is full of instances of women meeting their death in this way. We have to examine why witches were historically, and still are, held in such fear. Why do communities feel that the only way to control them is to torture and kill them in the most horrendous ways, with the sanction of the members of communities and in the face of law? The stories that we have heard today can be repeated across the Asia Pacific Region.

One broad definition of religion is that it provides answers to the inexplicable. This same argument can also be used to explain the naming, punishment and killing of witches. Over the years, those women have been named as witches in order to explain something for which their particular community could find no other answer.

But to leave it at this is simplistic. The phenomenon has to be seen in the context of the ruling hegemony - the prevailing ideological power of patriarchy. We have to remind ourselves that those who wield power will use any tool that comes to hand in order to maintain and strengthen their power. Finding a scapegoat to answer for those things for which they had no explanation, or over which they had no control, was and is very useful to the male power brokers. The phenomena of witches and witch hunting can also be used to maintain the status quo.

If we were to describe a witch from anywhere in the world, we would use similar words. *Single* - either by choice (the worst sin of all) or by being widowed, deserted, or a lesbian. *Wise* - holding knowledge of nature, mainly women's knowledge, knowledge of birth control, of abortion, of maternal care. *Able* - to survive without the protection of men. *Skilled* - in the use of herbs, knowledgeable of the weather, of crops, of the ways of animals. *Intelligent* - able to analyse information, to weigh up facts and to make informed predictions. Sometimes *outspoken* - not willing to play the role of *silent female*. *Unwilling to conform* - to the way a woman is *supposed* to look to please a man. What a list of sins!!! All the things that women are not supposed to be. The very recipe for a witch.

Having created this tool over time, the mainly male power brokers found that labelling and punishing *witches* was useful as more than creating *scapegoats* to take the blame for the inexplicable. A single woman owns lands and goods coveted by others in the community. How to get hold of them? Easy - brand her a witch and chase her from the community or kill her - with the full sanction of the community who collude out of fear of her supposed *witchcraft*. The same strategy can be used to get rid of the old, the helpless - those who may be perceived as a *burden* on a community.

*Development* is the new *unknown* - the new *inexplicable*. It has come into the lives of many people in the so-called third world and turned them upside down. Communities that were previously stable, self-supporting and with an established social order have seen their known worlds disappear. In their place has appeared a harsh new world, a world of poverty, a world shaped by the violence of development, which cares only for profit and not for people.

Once again people are searching for an answer to the inexplicable - a *why* to the total disruption to their lives. Paradoxically, in the face of such violence and in an attempt to regain some power and control over their shattered lives, people turn back to past solutions. Once again, *witches* are identified as the root of much evil - women are seen as the carriers of evil, and the violence development imposes on whole communities turns inwards and generates further violence against the most vulnerable members - women.

**Source:** Extracted from Jury statement by Dr. Eileen Pittaway, Juror, Speaking Tree WomenSpeak, Court of Women on Crimes Against Women Related to the Violence of Development, January 1995, Bangalore, India



Session V

## Gathering of Spirit

*This session heard women who have been central to many significant movements for peace and justice and are therefore re-finding new transformative visions for our violent times.*

### *Visual Testimony*

Cheri Honkala, USA  
Gila Svirsky and Nabeha Markus, Jerusalem  
Tatyana Klotchko, Ukraine  
Therese Ndoli, Rwanda  
Souad Abou Daya, Palestine  
Thandi Modise, South Africa

*Movement for the Homeless*  
*Women in Black for Peace*  
*Flowers in Wormwood*  
*Widows of Rwanda/Gacaca*  
*Intifadha*  
*Resistance to Apartheid*



*a free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current end  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.*

*- Maya Angelou*

## Organising in the belly of the beast is both necessary and dangerous



*Testimony on the Kensington Welfare Rights Union  
for the Homeless  
Cheri Honkala, USA*

*My name is Cheri Honkala, formerly homeless and living below the federal poverty level. I come from Kensington, which is the poorest district in Philadelphia, which is located in one of the richest countries in the world, the U.S.A. The number one source of income is government money known as welfare, and the second is drugs. This is the last year in my country for millions of people who can't find employment to receive government money. Next year, no matter how dire their circumstances are, they will never be able again to get money to help feed, clothe and house themselves and their children because they will have reached the five year time limit. For over a decade now, I have worked with these families all over my country, and what I have seen in the last two years strikes fear throughout my entire body, which I refuse to be immobilised by. The police are on every block now. Thousands of children have been taken from their mothers only because they don't have housing. People freeze to death on the streets of Philadelphia in the wintertime and that is written off as hypothermia.*



*Yet we have more abandoned houses than homeless people. Forty-four million have no health insurance. Our hospital is scheduled to close this year as well due to a decline of patients, not because people are well but because people can't afford to go to the hospital. The hospital is our last large employer.*

*Drugs are everywhere. We don't bring the drugs into our community. We don't have the ships and helicopters and necessary chemicals to produce the drugs that are placed in our neighbourhood. Heroin is the purest and cheapest drug sold in Kensington, cheaper and purer than anywhere in the world. I watched four people die one day from bad heroin. They placed the bodies alongside the roadside, so they wouldn't be found in the crack house. The police came and stacked the bodies on top of one another in the paddy wagon. No investigation. No nothing. Just another four expendable human beings dead in Kensington.*

*In our country we have more prisons than anywhere in the world and these prisons are filled with the poor. People imprisoned for economic crimes, for trying to survive.*

*That's why organising in the belly of the beast is both incredibly dangerous and necessary.*

*The Kensington Welfare Rights Union has played a leading role in the organising of the poor and the homeless people's movement in the U.S. Daily we move families into abandoned government owned properties, teach families how to reclaim food, hold sit-ins in hospitals demanding health care. We organise marches to the United Nations demanding that they see economic human rights violations in one of the richest nations.*

*During the World Trade Organisation demonstrations in Seattle, I was the second person arrested for just stepping into the street. I was charged with assaulting an officer and they tried to get me to agree to a plea of guilty, for one week in jail and a fine and two years of no demonstrating anywhere in the country. I said no – take me to trial. The charges were dismissed due to letters that came from all around the world. My entire existence, and the existence of the men and women I work with, is illegal. We are considered illegal because we are choosing to live. To build a movement of the poor led by the poor themselves. I have been arrested over 70 times now trying to secure food and housing for homeless women and children. I faced charges of four misdemeanors in the third degree when I got home for moving homeless people into the convention centre and into a Catholic church before the holidays.*

*And everything that happens to me and this movement you will never hear about because our country controls the media as well, and they are working hard to make us disappear into the prisons and to create an image that everything is fine in the land of plenty. Well, as long as we love our children, we will use our voice and we will not be silenced. Together, we will gather strength from one another, those of us who have slept outside in the rain, who have tasted our tears in the dirt, and who have buried our sisters, brothers and children. Together, we will rise and we will not be stopped. We will tell the story of how those American dreams have turned into nightmares as our country finances the killing of those around the world.*

*It takes food from those of us at home, denies us housing and locks us behind bars. It targets the organised poor because we can expose the contradictions in our country, and the exposure can be used to aid the struggles of the poor throughout the entire world. Those of you who think that there is no hunger in America – think again. Those of you who think that we don't cry rivers of tears when we sleep on the pavement with our children – think again. Those of you who don't believe that the poor are going to organise and turn our country upside down – think again.*

*We have the resources and the ability to house and feed everyone. We, together, will end poverty because it is possible and because we must!*



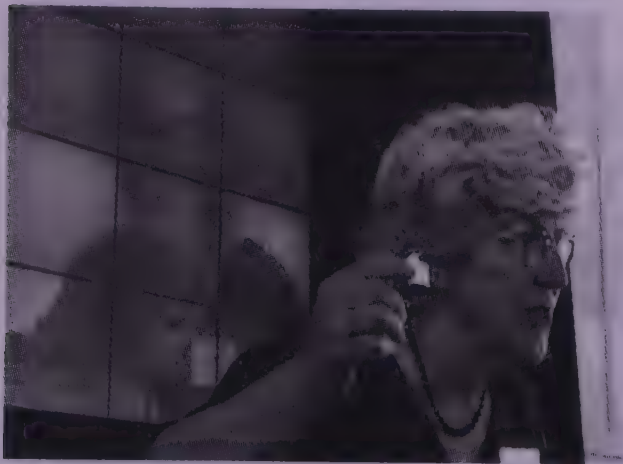
When you sing a song on your own  
or get angry with people  
or as you learn new things  
I'll be in the sounds and the words.

If you fall into darkness  
I'll come  
to your side with amazing lightless colours.

When you roll in the emptinesses  
or say the branch you grab breaks,  
or a cell, an iron, oppression  
don't ever say 'I am alone'  
I'll be by your side.

Recep Marasli  
Turkey

## We refuse to be enemies



*Testimony on the Women in Black for Peace*  
Gila Svirsky and Nabeha Markus, Jerusalem

### Gila Svirsky

*I am an Israeli, and I am a Jew.*

*This means, in a larger historical perspective, that not only has my people, the Jewish people, been the subject of centuries of persecution, primarily at the hands of Europeans, but it also means that I am today a citizen of a country, Israel, which is now engaged in the oppression of others, primarily the Palestinian people.*

*Perhaps this is a battered child syndrome playing itself out historically – the nation that was battered by others is today engaged in battering another. Perhaps. But this in no way excuses the behaviour of the Israeli government for its ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people under occupation by Israel. This in no way justifies the wanton acts of destruction of homes, farms and lives; the cruel closure that imprisons the Palestinian population inside their villages and cities – preventing the participation of several Palestinian women from attending this very conference – or the exploitation of Palestinians as a cheap source of labour for Israel's market.*

*There have been violence and terrorism on both sides, but I, as an Israeli citizen, hold my own country responsible, because we are the more powerful. It is therefore within our capacity and our obligation to end the bloodshed.*

*As part of that obligation, I, as an Israeli woman, have been engaged all my life in demanding that Israel makes peace. Individually and organisationally, I have raised my voice and put my body on the line. I have stood on the Women in Black vigil in Jerusalem every week for 13 years. I have demonstrated outside prisons for the release of Palestinian political prisoners. I have rebuilt with my own hands Palestinian homes that were demolished by the Israeli army. I have laid down on the street before our Ministry of Defence to prevent their generals from entering and leaving. And I have sat in jail, more than once, for these and other actions, most recently together with my Palestinian colleague who has the courage to stand before you today in solidarity with an Israeli, as allies for a just peace.*

*Indeed, this is my most important message for you today: women inside Israel and Palestine – not everyone, but a significant number of us – **have created a new paradigm of action.** We are an alliance of women – Palestinian and Israeli women together – who struggle together for peace. **A model of women who refuse to be enemies.***

*For the past 13 years, women have been the most vibrant, daring and progressive part of the peace movement on both sides of our divide. Palestinian and Israeli women have been meeting and negotiating with each other for years, **even when the very act of speaking to each other was illegal in Israel and prohibited in Palestine.***

*These negotiations began in secret, years ago in local homes and churches. Then we felt safer meeting in Berlin, Brussels, Bologna and other European cities. Today, we meet openly when we can, often in symbolic venues, such as on the border between Palestine and Israeli Jerusalem.*

*While there has often been dissension, debate and painful contexts in which we hold our discussions, we have always held aloft the common vision of peace. Were it left to us, we would long ago have had a peace agreement that settles the difficult issues between us.*



*We women advocate an end to the situation of occupier and occupied. We want to see Israel and Palestine as two separate states, side by side, with Jerusalem the shared capital of both. We want a just solution to end the suffering of the refugees. We believe that each nation has equal rights to statehood, independence, freedom, security, development, and a life of dignity. We want to see women take their rightful role as key negotiators for peace.*

*And a crucial point of agreement: We condemn all forms of brutality, violence and terrorism – whether by individuals, political groups, governments or the military. We have had enough of the killing, on both sides. Too many Palestinian and Israeli children are now dead or orphaned or maimed for life. And too many of our own sons, fathers and brothers have done that killing. For war victimises not only the innocent, it also brutalises the perpetrators.*

*Israeli and Palestinian women have engaged in educating our own peoples about the validity of both claims to this territory and have sought to counteract the demonisation in which both our societies engage. We have promoted dialogue between women, paid mutual condolence calls to the families of victims on both sides, been arrested for protesting what is outside our national consensus, and spoken out in a clear voice to demand a just solution.*

*And, apart from our public organisational activity, we women also operate as secret agents. We are not just the mothers, teachers, nurses and social workers of our societies. We are also secret agents serving up politics with your dinner, teaching the lessons of non-violence to every child in our classrooms, every patient in our care, every client we advise, every son and daughter that we love. We plant subversive ideas of peace into the minds of the young before the agents of war have even noticed. This is a long process, whose results are not visible overnight, but we believe in its ultimate efficacy.*

*The women's peace movement in Palestine and in Israel believes that the time has come to end the bloodshed. The time has come to lay down our weapons and our fears. We refuse to accept more warfare in our lives, our communities, our nations. We refuse to go along with the fear. We refuse to give in to the violence. We refuse to be enemies.*



*Nabeha Markus*  
*A Palestinian Arab from Israel*

*Dear friends,*

*It is 12 o'clock noon on a Friday. I am standing on the road across the town of Akko. It is very hot and the other women in our **Woman in Black** vigil are standing next to me, with their suntanned faces and with their **No to Occupations** signs held up so that all passersby can see them. Our black clothes make us feel proud and not like mourners. These same clothes are now worn by other **Women in Black** women demonstrators in the vigils in Tel Aviv, Haifa, Nazareth and other cities.*

*We are standing there, chatting and discussing future activities in Arabic and in Hebrew. We are Arab and Jewish women who come from villages and kibbutz places to protest against occupation and war, and for peace and security to all.*

*Cars pass by and we hear two different melodies - one encouraging, the other cursing and attacking. Some drivers and passengers cheer go on... keep up or we love and respect you but some others shout we wish you stay in black all your life, go to hell and death to Arabs or they shout at our Jewish members you betraying Jews. We answer by coming again on the next day to stand at the same street corner and to hold up the same slogans. It is the promise we made to each other 13 years ago.*



*Sometimes people ask me how we Jewish and Arab, Israeli and Palestinian women can get along so well together. It is so simple, I say, both Arabs and Jews suffer from the occupation. Each side loses in its own way. Both sides suffer from tension and violence, lack of budgets for services and from the everyday threat of a bursting war. Both sides suffer from unemployment or low wages and from living under poverty line. When our government divides the state budget, 75% is allocated to security and armament, and it becomes clear how all other fields are left behind. When factories are closed and transferred to cheaper cost countries, the workers who are thrown to the street are both Arabs and Jews. We women were not only born to give birth to children, but also to secure their lives. So we can't stand watching things pass by without reacting. Women are powerful and can change a lot. One poem says,*

*No one knows who is going to fall next-  
Children at the refugee camp  
Play under the street graffiti  
The heroes of the day  
Their names are revealed  
At the evening report  
No one knows...*

*Because we want our children's names to be written on their graduation diplomas and on their wedding invitations, and not in the evening news victims' list, and because we want our two nations to live in peace, we stand with our slogans every Friday. These include No to Occupation, Two Nations - Two States, Jerusalem - Two capitals for two states Israel-Palestine and Peace Now.*

However, the Israeli leaders haven't yet realised that a **peaceful solution of the conflict is not by occupation and violence**. Expansion on other people's lands will not bring security, and oppressing other people's right to independence and self-determination will only lead to disasters. Hundreds of Palestinian children were killed or injured during the last **intifada**, and we don't know if more will be added. These children don't fear the bombs and have nothing to lose as they have already lost their homes, food, trees, and studies. They will go on demonstrating to prove that they have the right to live, like the Jewish children of their age, and that they have the same colour of blood, play the same games and dream the same dream, of a peaceful life and secure childhood and adulthood in their independent country.

The peace initiatives that have started so far between the Israelis and the Palestinians have to continue. The USA should act in similar measures when it condemns occupation. **Why do all the US leaders accept the continuation of the occupation of the Palestinian land by the Israelis while they condemned the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait 10 years ago? Isn't it the same?** We know that they are worried about their interest in the Arab oil. The Palestinians don't have oil. They are a poor nation with refugees and poverty levels, and with damaged social and educational sub-structures.

Today, Israelis face the threat and the danger of the new anti peace extremist right wing government headed by Ariel Sharon. We in Women in Black are required more than ever to stand strong as Arabs and Jews, to struggle bravely against this government policy. Here we want to show the world our power as women coming from both sides of the battlefield.

Finally, we will continue to stand in our vigils, in winter and summer, in villages and towns, with Jews and Arabs, with our black dresses in order to end the double tragedy of both nations. When this happens, I will put on my rosy garment and sit, hug and care for my children and put them to sleep in my lap thinking how good it was to do all that. I will not dream.

I will do. We will do it together.

God bless you and bless all the children of the world.

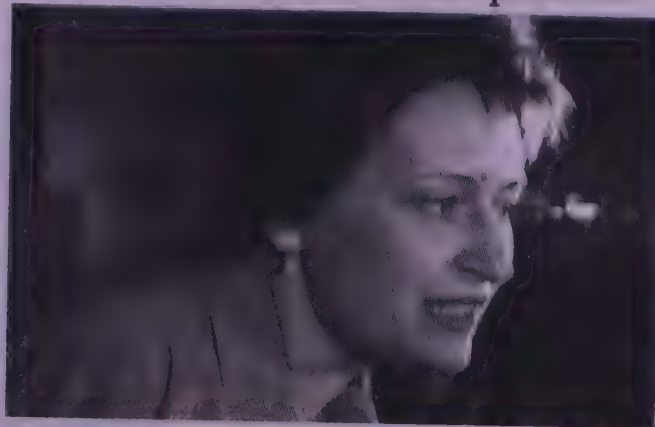
With my greetings.



*The sea doesn't want to make waves.  
The wind doesn't want to blow.  
Everything wants balance, peace  
and seeking peace has no peace*

Jaan Kaplinsky  
Estonia.

## Mir – Peace on our planet



*Testimony on the Flowers of Wormwood  
Tatyana Klotchko, Ukraine*

*Dear Participants,*

*I represent a small country, which is located in the centre of Europe – Ukraine, notorious to the world for the ecological catastrophe that took place on April 26, 1986 in Chernobyl. Several years after its closing, the nuclear explosion at Chernobyl nuclear station still alarms and excites the interest of the world community. What does Chernobyl mean for us today, 15 years after the catastrophe? It is:*

- \* 130 billion dollars of total economical expenses;*
- \* 2.6 thousand square kilometres of contaminated territories that are lost forever;*
- \* About 3.5 million casualties;*
- \* 2.5 million invalids, including 87 thousand invalids from Chernobyl.*

*Seven years ago in the capital of Ukraine - Kiev, a public organisation for the Chernobyl children-invalids, **The Flowers of Wormwood**, was created by some of the first ten parents who had children, invalids of Chernobyl. I now serve as leader of this organisation. The main purpose of our organisation is to provide legal and social protection to the families in which these children-invalids are brought up. These children suffer from diseases ranging from thyroid cancer, ailments of blood, heart, kidneys, and many kinds of the mental disorders due to the accident at Chernobyl nuclear station. Our main target groups are the women with those ill children, acknowledging the many problems that they have to bear on their fragile shoulders. Unfortunately, our men bear life difficulties badly, and having an unhealthy child is potential factor for family disruption, especially in conditions of mass unemployment and hard economic conditions in our country.*

*It is always more difficult for mothers to measure up to these tasks because they have to get their children treated and take care of them as well as maintain a good atmosphere within their families.*

*In 1991, a law was issued to defend the rights of people who were affected during the Chernobyl accident. However this law takes into consideration only the adult population of the country and neglects the children-invalids. To compensate this gap, we initially took the initiative to draft a legislation that took into consideration the children who have been affected with physical disabilities as a result of the Chernobyl accident, citing violations of their rights, which included the bureaucracy that the affected had to undergo in order to get the indemnification for the loss of health. Our organisation had been working with the Profile Commission of the Ukraine Parliament for two years to change the existing legislation. In 1996, we achieved the long-awaited approval, and supplied 1,300 children of Ukraine with guaranteed state social protection at a level not lower than that for the adult invalids of Chernobyl. It was our great victory! The Chernobyl children-invalids have managed to receive free medical supplies and treatment, social pension, annual sanitation and other privileges at a total sum of US \$25. This however is quite ridiculous, when the life health loss of the child estimated by one-indemnification amounts to US \$11 not forgetting the harsh economic realities of the country and high unemployment rates.*

*But all of us can agree that innocent children, hostages of the nuclear accident, have remained alone with their trouble, without state support. A notable shortfall of this legislation is that once the children attain the age of 18 the government ceases to support them. This has forced us to continue to lobby with the government reiterating that it is not acceptable.*

*Other services offered by our organisation include training these children who can't attend regular schools because of their disabilities, searching for jobs for invalid adults and providing psychological assistance. We also give much attention to educating people on ecological self-consciousness, while advocating and propagating the knowledge of the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe.*

*People of the whole world should know what great trouble it will be if people treat nature badly, use new technologies carelessly and unreasonably, especially in such dangerous fields as atomic engineering. Let our bad experience serve as a lesson to all mankind and help to keep our planet free from catastrophes! The women of the whole world should consolidate their efforts for preservation of their homes and family, but also for the world itself!*

*In Russia peace and world are symbolised by one word – Mir. And in it there is a deep sense. Only by keeping the planet on which we live and having kept peace and calmness on it, shall we ensure the future of our children.*

*On 26 April 1986, at 01.23 hours and 58 seconds, a series of explosions destroyed the nuclear reactor and building of the fourth power generator unit of Chernobyl atomic power station.*

*During World War II, the German fascists destroyed 619 Belarusian villages along with their inhabitants. As a result of the Chernobyl disaster, the country lost 485 villages and hamlets. During the war, one in four Belarusians lost their lives. After Chernobyl, one in five Belarusians, 2.1 million people, are living in contaminated territory. Seven hundred thousand of these are children. Ongoing low level radiation results in a yearly increase in the number of Belarusians suffering from cancers, mental disability, neuro-psychological disorders, and genetic mutations.*

**Source:** "Chernobyl" volume of the Belarusian Encyclopedia, Minsk, 1996



## A Human Voice, Solo

*I* didn't see the explosion itself, just the flame. Everything seemed to be lit up - the whole sky, a tall flame, soot, terrible heat, still no sign of my husband; I waited and waited. The soot came from burning bitumen. The power station roof was coated with bitumen. He said it was like walking over tar. They beat the flames. They kicked off burning radioactive graphite with their feet.

They set off without protective tarpaulin suits, just as they were, in their shirtsleeves. Nobody warned them. They were called out to attend an ordinary fire. Seven o'clock. That was when I was told he was in the hospital. I ran all the way, but the police had already cordoned it off and would not let anyone through. Only ambulances. After that it was Moscow, the Acute Radiation Sickness Clinic, for 14 days. It takes 14 days for a man to die of radiation sickness.

I was with him through life and I was with him when they laid him in his coffin, although what sticks in my memory is not the coffin but a big polythene bag. That bag. They asked me in the mortuary, "Do you want to see what we are going to dress him in?" I did. They did not put shoes on his feet, though. They couldn't find any big enough, because his feet had swollen so. They had to cut the uniform too, to get him into it. The body wasn't intact anymore; it was just one big wound. In the hospital, those last days, if I lifted his hand the bone in his arm would be hanging there; his body had come away from it. Bits of his lungs and his liver came out of his mouth. He was choking on his own innards...I would wrap my hand in a bandage and push it into his mouth to fish all that stuff out of him. I can't describe it. It can't be written about. It was all so dear to me. I loved him so much. They just couldn't find any shoes big enough to fit his feet. They laid him in his coffin barefoot.

All the power station people live near me: the watch, we call them. They have worked at the atomic power station all their lives, and to this day they go there as watchmen. Many of them have terrible illnesses, disabilities, but they won't abandon the power station. Who needs them, where are they needed today? A lot of them die, instantly. They will just be sitting on a bench, and then they fall over. Or they leave home, they are waiting for the bus, and then they fall down dead. They are dying off, but nobody has asked them properly to tell their story, what we lived through. People do not want to hear about death and things that are frightening.

**Source:** A Prayer for Chernobyl, Index on Censorship 1/1998, Ludmilla Ignatenko, wife of Vasily Ignatenko, a fatally injured fireman.

*Within* days of the accident, books on radiation, books about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, even books about X-rays vanished from the libraries. The word on the street was that Authority had ordered them withdrawn in order to avoid panic.

People discovered a test, and everybody started looking out for it. While there were sparrows and pigeons in a town or village, it was habitable for human beings too. You would be traveling along in a taxi, and the driver would wonder why birds were flying into the windscreen and getting killed, as if they were blind or had taken leave of their senses. As if they wanted to commit suicide.

**Source:** A Prayer for Chernobyl, Index on Censorship 1/1998, Evgenii Alexandrovich Brovkin, lecturer at Gomel State University.

## The Children's Choir

*I* was in hospital. It hurt so much. I said, *Mummy, please, it's too sore. Can you kill me?*

We were loaded onto a convoy. The little ones were shrieking and dirtying themselves. There was one adult to twenty children. All the children were crying, *Mummy! Where's my mummy? I want to go home.* I was ten. Girls my age helped to calm the little ones down. Women came to meet us on the platforms and made the sign of the Cross over the train. They brought home-baked cakes, and milk, and warm potatoes.

We were transported to Leningrad province. There, however, when we were approaching stations people would make the sign of the Cross over themselves and keep their distance from us. They were scared of our train; at every station we came to they hosed it down for ages. When we jumped out of the carriage at one stop and ran to the station buffet they would not let anyone else in. *Here are Chernobyl children in there eating ice cream,* they said. The buffet lady was saying to someone over the phone, *When they leave we'll wash the floor with bleach and scald the glasses.* We heard.

We were met by doctors. They were wearing gas masks and rubber gloves. They took our clothes and all our belongings away, even envelopes, and pens and pencils. They put them in cellophane bags and buried them in the woods.

A year later we were all evacuated and they buried our village. My dad is a driver. He drove there and told me. First they dug out a big pit five metres deep. Then the fireman would come along and wash a house from the ridge of its roof to its foundations in order not to spread radioactive dust. The windows, the roof, and the door; they washed the lot. Then a crane would pull the house up from where it stood and put it in the pit. There would be dolls and books and jam jars falling everywhere. The digger would fill the pit in and then everything was covered with sand and clay and rolled down hard. In place of a village you had a flat field. They sowed ours with spring wheat. Our house is under there; and our school and village hall; and my herbarium and two stamp albums. I really hoped I could go back to get them. And I had a bicycle.

I am twelve and I am disabled. The postman brings two pensions to our house: one for me and one for my granddad. When the girls in my class found out I had leukemia they were afraid to sit next to me or touch me.

The teacher said, *Draw radiation.* I drew yellow rain falling. And a red river.

**Source:** "A Prayer for Chernobyl" Index on Censorship 1/1998 Svetlana Aleksiyeovich.



*It grows out of crumbling legends,  
from slow wisdom, quick courage...*

*From flowing water, streaming moisture  
neither life, nor escape for him –  
it is sprinkled in living blood,  
but only from the wound – from the heart of the poet.*

Bozor Sobir  
Tajikistan

## Western jurisprudence cannot play a role here



*Testimony on Gacaca as an Alternative Form of Justice  
Therese Mukandoli, Rwanda*

*Genocide and war, which are rampant in Rwanda, have not only been the cause of death to several thousand people but are also the cause of the tear in the social fabric; the lack of mutual confidence; the terrible sexual violence committed on women and young girls, many of whom suffer from AIDS or have unwanted children; and the trauma that persists till now.*

*One should look at the consequences - many widows and orphans live in misery, a great number of prisoners are a burden on all the surviving Rwandese and in particular their wives, others are refugees in foreign countries and many of these are separated from their families. We have a large number of children as heads of family.*

*In spite of all these problems, the Rwandese women have not remained with folded arms. They have looked for ways and means to leave this unpleasant situation. It is thus that many feminist associations were born and organised to face their problems.*

*Relying on the United Nations and the organisations that promote women's groups within the collective PROFEMMES/ Twese Hamwe and other organisations, these women appear from all social strata and all ethnic communities that are determined to promote peace and national reconciliation.*

*Among these associations of women, the Network of Women Working for Rural Development (which I represent) in partnership with a Dutch Organisation SNV, has been the first to put up the mechanisms and the social institutions for the regulation of conflict through the promotion of community dialogue, conciliation, mediation, and the facilitation to succeed in mutual understanding and tolerance. To do this, this association has resorted to the ancient tradition of Gacaca for the resolution of conflict.*

### *What is Gacaca?*

*In the Rwandese culture, when somebody committed a fault for which they should be held responsible, that person was put into the hands of the family or the village. The wise-of the family or the village along with other respected people examined the situation. They pronounced punishment while everyone watched over the reconciliation between individuals or between families. One seated oneself in the Gacaca (plants): Gacaca signifies a meeting of the villagers on a grass patch in open air to make a decision on a difficult situation.*

*Little by little, with colonisation, the value of this system was lost to benefit the judicial system, which favoured the punishment of the guilty without paying attention to the reconciliation of the two parties in conflict. With the judicial system, many times the guilty would not be sanctioned in addition to punishment (imprisonment or amends) hence hatred was strengthened between the parties in conflict instead of reconciliation.*

### *The Tools Of Traditional Gacaca*

*Today in Rwanda these tools have been documented in the Gacaca jurisdictions instituted by the law and order to assist in the creation of a framework of truth to judge more than 120,000 prisoners presumed guilty of genocide.*

*As the Network of Women, we have joined others in the framework to do justice in Rwanda, and together we have brought back the participative processes of Gacaca and the old Gacaca platform, which is ideal for the management and settlement of conflicts. We have also constructed a national commission for Unity and Reconciliation and a commission for the TIPR (Tribunal International Pour Rwanda). In addition to these, we have set up commissions for elections, to work on the constitution, for men's rights, and to fight against AIDS, corruption and poverty.*

### *The World in Jugdement*

*The debate on whether International War Crimes Tribunals help or hinder national reconciliation leads back to the central ambiguity of international humanitarian law; its principles are by now well established, yet there has never been a permanent body with the power to enforce them. The basic rules date from the determinedly idealistic period of institution-building that followed World War II: the Nuremberg Principles, endorsed by the United Nations, and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, whose Common Article 3 extends the reach of international law to cover conflicts *not of an international character*. But the decision at any time to apply these laws is a political decision. Set up by resolution of the Security Council, the current tribunals exist not simply to enforce the law, but to promote the restoration of *peace and security* - the Security Council's guiding remit under the UN Charter. If the Security Council decides that the tribunals' pursuit of justice no longer promotes peace and security, it has the ability, indeed the responsibility, to close them down. But this begs the key questions: *What kind of justice? What kind of peace?**



Supporters of the tribunals tend to say their fundamental contribution to reconciliation lies in the notion of *individualising guilt*. It is an idea as old as Nuremberg: by holding military and civilian officials - even heads of state - responsible for criminal actions as individuals, you remove the stigma that would otherwise be attached to the nation in whose name the acts were carried out. Updated to the new world of ethnic conflict, its relevance is even clearer. If Serbs, Croats and Muslims are to rebuild any sort of common society, and similarly Tutsis and Hutus, they must learn not to judge each other guilty merely by virtue of the ethnic group to which they belong. Punishing those who have committed atrocities removes their influence and example from the political scene and makes it easier for *voices of reconciliation* to be acknowledged.

As far as this goes, it's an attractive and plausible idea. But the argument is more ambiguous than it may at first appear. In societies where participation in atrocities was widespread, pervasive even, it's unrealistic to think that an international tribunal could begin to process all such cases, even if it had 10 times the resources that the UN has grudgingly granted to the current ad hoc bodies. In Bosnia, war crimes like ethnic cleansing or the deliberate targeting of civilians appear to have played a fundamental part in the military strategy of the Bosnian Serb forces; these were not, it seems, aberrations from the norm, but rather a deliberate policy of terror. In Rwanda, the level of criminal involvement appears to have been even higher. Government forces have detained around 74,000 people on suspicion of having taken part in the genocide, and many additional suspects have fled abroad.

It is neither practicable nor desirable for an international court to try to prosecute all these cases, not least because of the intrusion into national life it would entail. What international bodies can do is to establish *an order of responsibility*: go after the ringleaders who organised and promoted systematic violations of human rights. Justice Goldstone and his team recognise this. In a thoughtful talk he gave at a recent conference, Payam Akhavan, a legal adviser in the prosecutor's office, stressed that the Rwandan genocide was the result of *careful planning and execution under the direction of political elites* and argued that *the symbolic effect of prosecuting even a limited number of such leaders before an international jurisdiction would have a considerable impact on national reconciliation*. But to say this is to say that effective reconciliation will inevitably depend on the interaction between international trials and the domestic situation. Isolated from a corresponding effort to foster justice internally, the work of international tribunals will remain selective and unsatisfactory, their contribution to reconciliation inevitably frustrated.

*As a result of our work and struggles, the old, the sick, and the detained who have incomplete records or no records at all, have been discharged from their punishments, and minors are being sent to the centers for re-education in order to regain their households. We have also set up a foundation of support for the rescued, and the tribunals and agents qualified in matters of jurisdiction have sensibly argued to free the people presumed guilty of genocide. The mission of these mechanisms is to guarantee national reconciliation and to assure durable peace in Rwanda.*

*The results of applying Gacaca, the traditional method of conflict resolution, are remarkable.*

*The Rwandese like each other again and share these activities. They help each other in their rustic work, they help each other in the transport of the sick, they give each other gifts, mixed marriages are frequent and successful, the students of mixed races take lessons and live together in boarding school, etc.*

### *The Traditional Gacaca Method*

*To facilitate the judicial system, a law on the organisation of action on constitutive infractions of genocide crimes and massacres aimed to eradicate the culture of impunity has been put in place. Those responsible for the country must make public consultations, consider the research already conducted by the national university of Rwanda, and propose to form a justice system in which the population is called to participate and to reveal the truth. Others consider that this process of Gacaca should be renovated and renamed, The participative Gacaca jurisdictions or Gacaca tribunal.*



*The Gacaca processes are fully legal in that they are ordinary tribunals of the public ministry, but the people who refuse to testify, who give false testimony or who hide evidence are committed to the public ministry which they follow. In every cell, in every sector, in every district, in every province of the Rwandese Republic, there will be a Gacaca called to study the constitutional infractions in the crime of genocide and the crimes against humanity committed in Rwanda between 1/10/90 and 31/12/94. The members of the Gacaca in their zones of intervention are respectable Rwandese elected by the general assemblies of cells in which they reside.*

*The Rwandese are sensitised and ready to participate actively in the participative Gacaca jurisdictions; they are ready to get elected and want to set their stones in the construction of the social fabric torn by war and in the reinstitution of peace. Rwandese women are considered as truthful and impartial people. The women are ready to help and to participate since they undergo all the consequences if they are not there where the decisions are taken.*

### ***The Advantages Of Gacaca***

#### ***Social Advantages***

*The culture of speaking the truth resolves the problems of families who throw stones at each other. It abolishes the culture of impunity even while there is a participative justice (for all Rwandese above 18 years). Most important is a process of reconciliation.*

*For the success of Gacaca, it is important that every citizen should be conscientious and involved in the reestablishment of the social fabric.*

#### ***Economic Advantages***

*Gacaca helps bring in social justice through facilitating compensation for the victims of genocide. It helps to reduce the charges against the prisoners and accelerate their lawsuits/trials. Gacaca also tries to make prisoner work productive and ensure that the decisions put forth by the International Tribunal for Rwanda at Arusha are carried out according to the operational justice of the country. Also, the basic input into the judicial system will be reduced and invested in other programmes of development.*

This is the danger that, in different ways, now confronts the tribunals for Rwanda and former Yugoslavia. In the case of Rwanda, the tribunal is beginning to lose the confidence of the country it was set up to help. The new Rwandan government initially welcomed the tribunal when it was established in November 1994. Since then, however, frictions have developed, particularly over the complications involved in bringing cases to trial, and, inevitably, over differences in values and priorities. The tribunal has been short of money and resources from the start: *We're 25 investigators looking into a million deaths*, one legal adviser recently complained to a US newspaper. There are no documents to help build cases, witnesses are afraid of reprisals and most of the major suspects are abroad - in Zaire, Kenya or other countries. Against this background, prosecutors have managed to issue only a handful of indictments though these include a number of significant figures and have less than a quarter of these in custody. The first trials are due to start in the autumn.

Rwanda's own justice system has done no better in trying to sort through the appalling aftermath of the genocide; despite the colossal number of suspects (many being held in dreadful conditions) no cases have yet come to court. Nevertheless, the common difficulties faced by the prosecution teams appear, at least for the government, to be a source of conflict rather than co-operation. Senior government figures have begun to question the length of time the tribunal is taking and, more ominously, to complain about its *international character*. Precisely those qualities that are supposed to be the distinctive contribution of an international body - neutrality, objectivity, universality - have been attacked.



In particular, there is resentment that the tribunal is based not in Rwanda itself, but in Arusha in Tanzania; that it has priority over domestic jurisdiction; and that it does not impose the death penalty - which the leading figures in the genocide would certainly face in Rwanda. The country's deputy justice minister Gerard Gahima recently told the writer Philip Gourevitch: *It makes it harder to forgive the ordinary people if we don't have the leaders here to be tried in Rwandan courts before the Rwandan people according to Rwandan law.* Others familiar with the situation in Rwanda deny that relations with the tribunal are as bad as Gahima suggests. But his charges nevertheless go to the heart of the tribunal's *raison d'être*.

It is an anomaly, at the least, that middle-level *genocidaires* will face the death penalty in Rwandan courts while those whose seniority and guilt is sufficient to attract the interest of the tribunal can only face life imprisonment. On the other hand, few would seriously propose that the international community should commit itself to a barbaric penalty rejected by a majority of countries.

The more substantial point is that the tribunal will fail if it doesn't establish its credibility in the country where the crimes were committed. It is hardly surprising that many in Rwanda should want swifter, perhaps looser, and certainly harsher justice than is on offer through the court in Arusha. Yet a tribunal that represents (at least in theory) the impartial judgment of the world cannot endorse a judicial procedure that incorporates any element of revenge.

### *Political and Cultural Advantages*

*The countries in sight of development are not democratically mature, and the economic and political dependence on foreigners stresses that the population be submissive and listen to all authority. The Gacaca system is a school of sagacity where every citizen participates in the development of the country; there is both public and individual responsibility. Cultural advantages include the recovering of dialogue and the reestablishment of traditional values of truth, justice and equality.*

### *Advantages for Women*

*Gacaca is particularly advantageous to women because it integrates the gender approach in all its processes. Women have an active hand in the development of the country. They form and join associations that promote women after the genocide, and they have shown great courage in reconstructing the country's fight against violence and poverty. Every woman has worth, which should be recognised as central to that of her society.*

*The Gacaca recognises this and acknowledges her role as a natural healer. Having been the principle victim of genocide, today 70% of Rwandese are under the threshold of poverty with 34% of women as heads of poor households; this must be of central concern to the Gacaca process in order to reach durable peace.*

*This effort to make women participate in the Gacaca jurisdictions is another step towards affirming her central role in the management of community conflicts. The Gacaca system is a method of resolution of conflicts that involves all citizens, men and women, in which they recognise their moral values. The advantages cited above permit the recovery of the peace of unity and mutual confidence, which is the source of development.*

*Our dear ex-coordinator of the Network of Women and member of this worldwide tribune of women, Veneranda Nzambazamariya, would have liked to say:*

*"It is necessary to fight for peace because it is not wrapped up like a gift but has to be loved and protected. My peace is your peace. My development is your development, if you accept that we are all humans on the same earth."*

*I would like to bring to your attention that she has been honoured by UNIFEM with an international award called Millennium Peace Prize for Women on the 8/3/2001 in New York in the United States.*

*The tragedy of genocide that has been known in Rwanda has occasioned a special situation; it is evident that western jurisprudence cannot play a role here. Yes, we need to use international cooperation, but we should also return to the flesh of Rwandese tradition with its values of social justice. This is in the hope that justice should be rendered to the victims of genocide believing that the truth is nothing but the truth. We hope that the effects of genocide will be repaired and that all Rwandese communities will find themselves hand in hand, for there is nothing to bequeath to our children if their fathers are deceased or in prison and their mothers are in desperate situations.*

*At this end, I would like to thank in the name of all Rwandese, particularly in the name of all Rwandese women, this World Court of Women against War, for Peace, which has invited us to share our experience of Gacaca in Rwanda as one of the principle methods of resolution of conflicts.*

*Thank you again.*

The challenge of *reconciling local norms and universal values* has become an overriding issue in many areas of international relations. Clearly the international community will overreach itself if it doesn't observe the principle of letting justice be administered at the lowest possible level. It could be argued that Rwanda is such a case; that the government that overthrew the last murderous regime now has the right to reclaim control over the punishment of its worst offenders. Yet the Rwandan crisis has always been, and remains, an issue of international dimensions both because of the huge number of refugees in neighbouring countries, and the potential for ethnic conflict in Burundi to flare up into a calamity of comparable proportions. Indeed, it is notable that the Rwandan government's attitude to the tribunal has become more hostile at exactly the time when tension between Tutsis and Hutus is again increasing, when there are reports of repression and violations of human rights carried out by the regime. The country's drift away from support for international justice may correspond to a less inclusive view of the potential for inter-ethnic reconciliation.

**Source:** Extracts from article by Anthony Dworkin, *Index on Censorship* 5, 1996



*I am the one you needed to bury alive  
to feel fearless as the wind again,  
For you never knew  
that stones can never suppress a voice.*

Kishwar Naheed

**We will not accept "peace" at any cost**



*Testimony on the Intifada  
Souad Abou Daya, Palestine*

*Palestine is once again in headlines all over the world. Just as hopes had risen that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would come to a peaceful end and that the people of our two nations could move ahead with our lives, we have seen over the past five months a serious deterioration of the political situation, a decline into violence on a scale that has not been witnessed in our region for decades. Along with this has been the virtual collapse of the so-called Oslo Peace Process – a process that was doomed from the beginning and failed to bring about the realisation of fundamental, internationally-recognised Palestinian rights, a necessary precondition to lasting peace in the region. If nothing else, the current Intifada is a clear indication from the Palestinian people that we will not accept peace at any cost, not with a partner that pays lip-service to the notion of peace while continuing to pursue expansionist, colonialist policies and practices.*

*The cost of our people's commitment to justice and to the realisation of our rights has been high. Let's not be fooled by the Israeli propaganda machine, which has attempted to depict the recent violence as a form of Palestinian aggression, intransigence and barbarity, trying to portray Israel as the nation that is under siege, when in fact it is the exact opposite. The facts speak for themselves: We have been the victims of an increasingly brutal and violent Israeli occupation.*

*In the past five months, over 300 Palestinians have been killed, the vast majority of who have been armed with nothing more than a stone, and many of these have been children. Around 10,000 people have been injured, with one out of ten of these having suffered permanent disabilities. Israeli troops have used live ammunition, heavy artillery as well as rubber-coated metal bullets (often within lethal range) to disperse stone-throwing Palestinian civilians. The overwhelming majority of casualties have been young, unarmed boys and men posing no life-endangering threat to Israeli soldiers, who have typically responded with excessive lethal force. Medical personnel have detected a pattern of wounds to the upper parts of the body, especially the head and eyes, which has accounted for the high rate of death and permanent disability.*

*Not only must we bury our dead and heal our injured; there are emotional, psychological and social wounds that must be tended to as well*

*These facts are clear and established. There is an international consensus that the recent events in the Palestinian occupied territories were ignited by Israeli provocation and have escalated due to the excessive use of lethal force by Israeli security personnel. According to an Amnesty International report of 19 October, Israeli troops have violated not only international standards for law enforcement officials but also Israel's own internal rules of engagement for the occupied territories.*

*The United Nations Commission on Human Rights also affirmed this in its resolution of 19 October condemning **the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Israel against Palestinian civilians** – actions that it determined constitute **war crimes and crimes against humanity**. This reinforced the UN Security Council Resolution 1322 of 7 October, which called for Israel to **abide scrupulously to its legal obligations and its responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention** and condemned **the excessive use of force against Palestinians**.*

*Of particular concern to us as a Palestinian women's NGO is the impact the current conflict has had on Palestinian women. What has been disappointing has been the virtual silence in the international media with regard to the suffering of Palestinian women. As women's lives have become overburdened with the double suffering of living under a patriarchal, oppressive socio-cultural system as well as a stifling Israeli occupation, their voices have been largely silenced and they have been the target of demonisation and dehumanisation in the Israeli and international media.*

*A smear campaign has been waged against Palestinian women, whose humanity and morality have been questioned, accused of urging their children on to death. Little attention has been paid to the voices of the women themselves, to hear their stories and learn about their silent suffering. Rather, the images presented are constructed simply to dehumanise, demonise and violate the dignity of Palestinian women.*



*The fact is that Palestinian mothers are indeed human, and like all mothers, do not wish to see their children murdered. Palestinian mothers grieve over the loss of their children. They grieve even harder when they have to witness their child bleeding to death or lying stiff with a bullet in his head. In recent months, hundreds of Palestinian women have had to absorb the loss of children, brothers and fathers, and they have been forced to assume additional burdens that are pushing them to their human limits. The emotional and psychological trauma of this will carry with it effects well into the future. For every child that has been buried in recent weeks, gone with him are the dreams and hopes of a young human being, and those of his entire family. Women mourning the loss of a loved one must cope with not only the loss of life but also the loss of spirit and hope - things that require much effort and support to rebuild.*

*While we believe that it is important to offer support services for women who have suffered a loss, it is equally crucial to ensure that adequate services are made available to entire families, including fathers, who have been exposed to and traumatised by political violence. A failure to meet these needs immediately will hinder the healing process and facilitate the emergence of problems in the future. Particularly dangerous is that, without proper treatment, people will internalise the violence. As a result, Palestinian society will be forced to pay the price of the recent events twice; now, with the suffering and death, and later, with the long-term social implications of untreated trauma. It is likely that women will become prime targets for male frustrations and internalised violence within the domestic sphere, becoming the ultimate victims of the recent uprising.*

*During the first Intifada of 1987-93 and in the period after, the political violence profoundly impacted the lives of women. It has been well documented how the violence directed at the Palestinian people as a whole by the Israeli occupation was accompanied by a sharp increase in the level of violence directed against women within the home.*

*The implications of this trend continued long after the Oslo Accords were signed and the Israeli and Palestinian leaders became so-called partners in peace. Without an adequate social service sector in the Palestinian territories, many men who had experienced trauma were left without proper treatment. Women ultimately bore the burden of much of this suffering, becoming targets for untreated, disturbed husbands and lacking access to support services to deal with their own suffering.*

*During the current Intifada, we have already noticed a significant decline in the number of women and girls contacting our Centre's hotline. We are especially concerned over this given the fact that we know from experience that violence within the home will have increased during these months of strife. Unfortunately, in our society, the political situation and the national struggle have always taken precedence over other issues, and this has been to the detriment of women, who are left to rot within the prison of their homes, with few options of support or assistance.*

*For this reason, it is crucial that we do not allow ourselves to be victimised twofold by the Israeli aggression. We cannot fall into a similar pattern as in the past, watching our progress recede, while allowing the violence that has been carried out against our society to be re-directed against women and girls within our homes.*

*A political solution must be found for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This solution will not be reached through war but rather through negotiation. Any final settlement, however, must be based on the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and the full implementation of all relevant UN resolutions. This must include the establishment of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, the dismantling of Jewish settlements and the recognition of the right of return for Palestinian refugees. In addition to reaching a final political settlement, it is essential for the building of sustainable peace, that there be a process of reconciliation between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, Jews and Arabs. Only by reconciling ourselves with the past and recognising historical injustices can we hope to build a stable and secure future for all peoples of this land.*

*As a women's legal and social work service and advocacy institution, we firmly believe that the social ills within Palestinian society cannot be solved without a permanent and just political solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The cycle of violence that revisits our region at regular intervals has a devastating impact on development in all spheres. Indeed, working for social development is impossible under the current circumstances. For this reason, we insist that a just political situation is the only basis upon which a viable Palestinian state can be established in which the rights and freedoms of all citizens, both women and men, are respected and the rule of law upheld.*

*For now, people need to deal with their grief and trauma immediately. We, and other Palestinian NGOs concerned with social and health issues, have begun to provide services addressing issues of death, loss, violence and crisis management. Not only must we bury our dead and heal our injured; there are emotional, psychological and social wounds that must be tended to as well. Indeed, this is our great challenge if we are to gain something from this crisis and attempt to lay the foundations for a better, stronger future for our people.*

*As women's lives have become overburdened with the double suffering of living under a patriarchal, oppressive socio-cultural system as well as a stifling Israeli occupation, their voices have been largely silenced and they have been the target of demonisation and dehumanisation in the Israeli and international media.*



The Council of Wisdom  
**Jury**

*In this session, the Council of Wise Women and Men, who listened to the many testimonies of victimhood and valour, survival and strength wove their insights into a new narrative of care, compassion and justice that helped to enhance our collective search for new visions of peace for our times.*

Zanelle Mbeki  
Majid Rahnema  
Vjosa Dobruna  
Mililani Trask  
Aicha Ech-channa  
Denis Halliday  
Fatima Meer  
Daw Aung Sung Suu Kyi

*South Africa  
Iran/France  
Kosovo  
Hawaii  
Morocco  
Ireland  
South Africa  
Burma*

## Peace in the image of women

*Zanelle Mbeki \**



*I* would like to start by paying my respects and honour to the women who spoke today, who gave testimony and those who gave expert witness to the Courts of Women. I think that many of the women spoke from their hearts. I have been associated with the women's movements since the early seventies. After the 1974 women's conference took place in Mexico, women continued to talk amongst themselves; I got impatient and asked why are we talking to ourselves and not talking to men? But the twenty-five years of talking have shown me that there are many layers in the hearts of women, and that often when we close certain doors in order to continue living, to smile and to work, we need more and more confidence, which we gain through talking with other women because they listen and believe us. And the more confident we become, the more doors that will open. I think that what I heard today is from further down than I have heard before. In a way I was hoping that this would be the last door. I don't know if we can go further down to listen to further humiliation and to further suffering by women. We thank them for opening those doors for us so that we can share, heal and recover.

When Corinne asked me to join the group of wise men and women I was reluctant. I don't feel like a wise woman because I don't know what to do with the information I have received. I won't even dare to comment on some of the things we heard today. But I also know that the women who spoke are very wise. I work with wise women every day. I hope together, using all the wisdom in this hall and the untapped wisdom of the many women who couldn't be here today, that we will know what to do with the stories of pain and courage that we heard today. What I have seen today is a series of survivors, a litany of strength. There are no victims out here. I think that the Court of Women allows us to really see women's strengths and survival skills and not to view them as mere victims.

**\*Zanelle Mbeki**, the First Lady of South Africa, is a deeply committed social activist on issues related to poverty and women. She is also on the member of the Board of Directors of El Taller International.



While we have been talking in this Court about violence against women, I've been thinking that we should also have a court of our visions, a court of our dreams, -our dreams for peace, to spell out what is peace, what is women's peace. The testimonies we heard today are all forms of protest against everything that is keeping us from realising those dreams of peace. But we have to struggle for this peace, struggle against genocide, rape, ethnic cleansing, political repression, forced immigration, etc. We have to struggle against the production of small arms and landmines, trafficking, economic blockades and occupation. We have to struggle against other forms of globalisation, like genetic engineering.

Like somebody here said, we are here to tell all that has happened to us and convert what we have experienced into a positive energy towards the creation of a new world. I think of the new universalisms that Corinne spoke about this morning and also of alternative cultures and values for both men and women. In doing this we have to be very honest and look into ourselves as women and see that peace in the image of women is what we want.

There are certain things that we women do, which go against our goal of a peaceful society. We have also to clean up our acts. We can say many things about how women can do this, but in truth the children in the streets of Brazil, Kenya, Johannesburg, and Hillbrough have been put there, voluntarily or not, by women.

The experience, for example, of the South African women who testified on being a refugee is nothing we can be proud of. I think that there should be seminars for women that will allow them to speak of their experiences as refugees and gain support from other women. If we were not victims under apartheid, as Bishop Tutu said, why should we be victims of a government at this time? Why can't we also move forward to say how we address some of these areas as women, because they will only be overcome if we also form a very strong movement to fight against them in these areas.

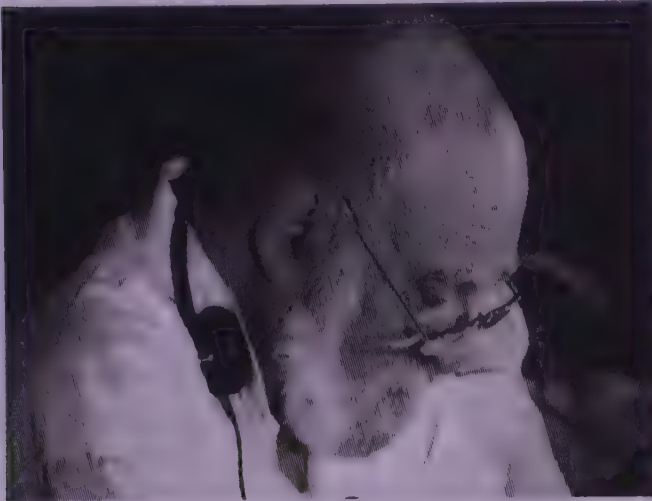
We have to move forward with the agenda that was presented here today. When I was talking with Fatima Meer, we thought that what we really need, like the women of Cuba, is a Court of South African Women. We need to go around to all the provinces in order to reset our agenda. Finally, I would like to thank the Asian Women's Human Rights Council and all of the South African women who have helped organise this conference. It has been a valuable one; you are sending us home with a lot to think about.

Thank you very much.



"I am the poorest amongst you,  
and there is my strength"

*Majid Rahnema\**



The testimonies we heard were so painful that I feel literally dumb, unable to utter any word. They helped me realise why in many world languages, including Latin and Persian, *to witness* means both *to testify* and *to be a martyr*. To various degrees, millions of women in this devastated world are simultaneously witnesses and martyrs of a world that seems to have gone crazy. But the stories you related also showed the exceptional qualities and the particular form of power women have in confronting their lot. As an outsider, especially as a man, I can only express my profound admiration to all of them. So, the only thing that came to my mind when I was asked to offer my comments, was, in the tradition established by Corinne, to read you a poem - a story by Rabindranath Tagore on the riches of the poor. I apologise for having had to translate it from a French translation of the original. But even then, I think it expresses in beautiful terms my own faith in the way women know where their power stands and how they can actualise their own creative riches in dealing with their problems.

*"Who amongst us will take on the task of feeding the hungry?" asked Lord Buddha from his disciples, as famine was devastating Shrivasti.*

*Ratnakar, the banker, looked down and said, "Much more than my fortune is needed to those who are hungry."*

*Jaysen, the King's chief of Army said, "I would happily give away my life, but there is not enough food in my house."*

\* **Majid Rahnema** is currently a visiting professor at Pitzer College, Claremont, California teaching two courses on Poverty and Development and Governance and World Order. In his thirty-five year diplomatic career for Iran, he served among other posts as the Ambassador to the UN General Assembly (1962-1971), as the UN Commissioner for Rwanda-Burundi (1960-1961) and the Vice-President of the UN Economic and Social Council (1965-1967). Since his retirement from active UN service, he has devoted most of his time to writing, teaching and holding seminars.

He has written extensively and insightfully on education and development. Some of his cutting edge writing include Post Development Reader and the Riches of the Poor: Archeology of Poverty - his forthcoming book in French.



*Dharampal, who possessed large pastures, sighed, "The God of winds has dried out my fields, and I do not know how to pay the King's taxes."*

*Then, Supriya, the beggar's daughter, got up.*

*She bowed before everyone and said, "I will nourish all these miserable people."*

*"And how?" said all with surprise. "How do you expect to accomplish your wish?"*

*"I am the poorest amongst you," said Supriya, "and there is my strength. My treasure and my affluence, I shall find them at each one of your doors."*

Before going further, allow me to make another preliminary remark. Even though many of your pains are due to men, I hope you realise that there are also millions of other men for whom your struggles are an integral part of their own struggles for a more humane world. Desmond Tutu who addressed us this morning showed that he is indeed one of them. And, in a smaller measure, I find myself privileged to belong to this group.

In her opening address, Corinne appealed for a fuller unfolding of our *imaginary*, an exercise that could take us beyond the binary choices that continue to systematically reduce the quality of our vision and our sense of the human riches we share together. All we heard throughout the day gives us new reasons not to let the logic of the market, of profit making and of globalisation further colonise our imaginary. A radically new way of looking at others and at ourselves, a basic change of an *ethical* and *aesthetical nature* is, no doubt, necessary to help us all rediscover and regain the full potentials of our humanity. When this happens, I am convinced that the Supriyas of the world will all find the treasures they have in themselves for giving birth to a new humane world.

Having deeply listened to you, I would like now to share a couple of thoughts that represent, in their greater part, what I have actually learnt from women's struggles, thoughts that could also summarise what my personal experience has taught me on the same subjects.

The first, I believe, is that the search for the common good is no longer possible within the large and abstract metanarratives or ideologies that, particularly in the last two centuries, have captured people's imagination. Most of them have tended to impose on our minds universalistic models of truth and action that have taken us far from the very complex, localised and deeply rooted realities that constitute each one of our personal destinies. It is helpful, indeed, to study the history and the anatomy of dominations and power formations with a view to finding the so-called root causes to such questions as poverty, violence, racism and sexism. Yet, the many all-embracing ideologies that have tried to do so - such as scientism, communism, socialism, institutionalised religion, economic growth and development - have often proved to be misleading. They have perhaps helped, in some cases, to shed greater light on some aspects of truth that had previously been left in the dark. But the disproportionate powers of those mega-spots have also produced blinding effects on millions of people who had previously learnt to find their own paths in the semi-darkness of their particular life spaces. As a result, the new ideologies often dispossess them of their arts and of developing their own autonomous riches. A greater reliance on their own wisdom and the value of their own experiences can indeed help them find their ways - often, in a much surer fashion than grand theories of a universalistic nature that are, moreover, based on other people's perception of reality.

As an example, poverty was never problematised as it has now been by the dominant ideologies. For millennia, human beings lived with little, but they never considered themselves as poor. Even when poverty was invented by the first societies where the powerful and the rich started to create scarcities for the others, most people were "poor" without perceiving themselves as such. As a matter of fact, convivial ways of sharing what a given community could produce were the surest means of avoiding destitution and misery. Poverty became a *problem*, perhaps an insoluble one, only when it was reduced to a number of *lacks* generally defined in terms of the consumers belonging to the North and the profit-based attitudes of the Economic Man. The *root cause* of this modernised poverty was attributed to so-called under-developed economies. A ruthless war started on the *moral economy of subsistence* that subsequently transformed all people who used to live with little, and on their own means, to entire populations categorised as poor. The dominant discourse proposed *economic development*, together with technical and other forms of assistance (including military aid) was seen as an antidote to people's own ways of dealing with necessity. Consequently, all their immune systems of defense were being destroyed and poverty eradication campaigns ended up eradicating the convivial poor rather than poverty. Huge numbers of people were thus turned into indigents and incapacitated people and became increasingly dependant on external aid.



*A ruthless war started on  
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poor*

In the same vein, technological innovations aimed at increasing productivity were proposed with similar intentions of helping the poor. Yet, a study made in the Peruvian Andes on the effects of such innovations on potato production showed that by promoting a marketable model of a good potato, a huge number of peasants who used to produce a great variety of potatoes fit for the local conditions were systematically impoverished. Moreover, not only ecological biodiversity was directly threatened as a result, but also the poorer women who occupied a leading role in the community as bearers of traditional knowledge in this field were systematically dis-empowered and *dis-valued*. Paradoxically, to justify this, new forms of international assistance to women were professionally designed to teach them how to be empowered according to the new models of empowerment!

The second thought I would like to share with you is a corollary of the first. Only a different, multidimensional and plural approach to reading the world can bring about genuine alternatives to the lot of the underdog. To go back to the same field of poverty, the deprivations and scarcities of the *poor* cannot be resolved by the prevailing model of economic growth. For the very simple reason that such scarcities are systematically created by economy. On the other hand, we social agents of change, are also, in one way or another, engaged in creating those scarcities through our discourses and practices. The moment I come to internalise the consuming habits and other modes of life of a so-called developed country, I create scarcity and poverty for those who cannot materially afford those habits. The moment I believe that chemical fertilisers are the best, if not the sole means to economically *valorise* a given piece of land, I create scarcity for all the peasants who used organic fertilisers or other traditional forms of agricultural production for their own subsistence; and I become a serious threat to their livelihood. The moment I identify health care with an ultra-modern medical system of doctors, nurses, hospitals and sophisticated surgery, I create scarcities in the field of poorer people's health etc. Therefore sincerely caring for my suffering neighbours, I should, in the first place, try to identify the sites on which such scarcities are created. Having done so, I would have no difficulty to find out that the *problem* of poverty is not somewhere else. It is often directly or indirectly related to the very site pertaining to my own discourse and practices. In other terms, each one of us, often without realising it, creates the scarcities of which suffer the so-called poor. Our task is therefore to relocate the *problem*, firstly, in ourselves, in our ways of perceiving and constructing reality, in the discursive and non-discursive activities we are engaged in. Poverty would cease to be a *problem*, the day the great variety of social agents producing socially generated scarcities put an end to the activities leading to the production of those scarcities.

A third comment I would like to make is on power. Power, I believe, is not something one could acquire or seize from somewhere or somebody. Neither can it be given or taken. Power is a capacity proper to every human being. Each one of us is a microcosm with its specific form of power, the latter representing our capacity to do the things we want to do in life. Hence, we are all potentially powerful. Only, to be born, power needs to be exercised. Now, power, *per se*, is neither good nor bad. The nature of the power that emanates from an individual, or a group, depends on the way it has been formed, shaped, moulded and impressed as it has been exercised through its encounters with other forms of power. Thus, power takes the

colour of all the cultural, historical, social, educational and other influences that have affected it. In the same manner, it changes as it interacts with new kinds of power. This is how particular forms of power originate, develop, take shape and are altered while they circulate between different subjects, between couples, parents and children, teachers and pupils, gurus and disciples, rulers and ruled, masters and slaves, and vice-versa. And, out of all these encounters, new forms of power develop at the social and political level. Legal, *sovereign*, vertical or top-down forms of power are only one more visible aspect of it. But even those are shaped by the movement and the flux of thousands of power manifestations that take place, on an everyday basis and in a transversal fashion, while different social actors exercise power. So there is no such abstract thing called power, which could be bad or good. Power is nonetheless often dangerous, depending on the nature of power and the conditions under which it is exercised.

In that context, Erich Fromm has made an important distinction. For him, there are basically two forms of power, *biophilic* and *necrophilic*; the first is oriented towards life or love and the second towards death and destruction. When *power is imbued with love, attention and respect for others, it generally leads to what is called the good*. It changes, both its author and all the persons it touches, in ways that elevate them, bring up the divine in them. *It transforms ordinary people into caring humans*. It is also essentially non-violent. By contrast, necrophilic power de-humanises or brutalises not only its author but also often its victims. Being, by nature, violent and death oriented, it is both self-destructive and destructive of others. As such, it is also counterproductive. For it may reach its immediate goals through the sheer use of brute force, but it also ultimately destroys its author's capacity to achieve one's ends.

*The overall success of a globalised and competitive market is not only to economise human life but also to masculinise all forms of power*



Having said so, it can be easier for me to say why I have a personal problem with the use of the very fashionable word of *empowerment*. As I already mentioned, every human being is a seed of power, a microcosm of power with all its potentialities to do good or to serve necrophilic purposes. The paradigm assumes that the person to be *empowered* has no power, which is simply absurd. What I have heard this morning convinces me, more than ever, that women have always had, and indeed continue to have, tremendous power, generally of a biophilic nature, as they are physically bearers of life. This is a form of power that it would be both dangerous and undesirable to take away from them under the pretext of *empowering* them, particularly when power is understood in a *masculine*, domineering fashion. *Had women not had their own form of power, they could have never resisted all that has been done to them through violence and male-dominated societies.* It is this particular, culture specific and often potent power that has allowed women of all cultures to keep their integrity despite the multifarious forms of subjugation to which they have been exposed.

*It is important that these particular culture-specific forms of women's power against domination receive a yet greater attention by all.* In particular, by women who, rightly, take pride in what differentiates their power from what is generally perceived as *male power*. I think, for one, that it would be a great loss to humanity if the paradigm of *empowerment* would tend to transform the biophilic and love oriented features of feminine power into the dominant model of *male power*, that is, the *highly competitive, violent and functional form of power* that has become *a condition of social success* in modern economised societies. That form of power is indeed a must for a successful career in a globalised market economy. It is not, I guess, what the majority of women in the world, the more sensitive and caring ones who want to build a different future, would want in life.

Coming back to power as an exercise, what is therefore important is to realise that, for a biophilic person the objective cannot be to seize a power that, as a rule, is a necrophilic one. It is to fully understand the richness of their biophilic forms of life and to exercise it in their daily struggle for the birth of a world that would no longer need necrophilic power for anyone.

In the political arena, Gandhi was perhaps the first politician who refused to want to seize power, for he knew that such an objective could easily end up destroying or corrupting his own compassionate form of power. I guess it is the same worry that has led Subcommandante Marcos to say repeatedly that the Zapatista movement was not interested in seizing power. What they both stressed is that *more, ever extending spaces of freedom* are now needed for new kinds of power to be exercised by those who want to *change the very nature of power*. It is the same message that I think I received today from the majority of the martyrs/witnesses who shared with us their pains and frustrations. I hope I am right. For it would indeed be a loss for the common good of all humans if the women's aim would be essentially to seize, even to share, the presently corrupt power of their rulers. One should not have any illusion regarding the fact that the present support given by the dominant discourse to the women's claim to share power with men is far from being innocent. The overall success of a globalised and competitive market is not only to economise human life but also to masculinise all forms of power. What the future globalised *village* seeks to promote is a new species of undifferentiated unisex persons, composed of professionally qualified men and *ex-women* who could develop the cold, institutionalised type of power required by the model executives of a successful corporation.

By contrast, it is the struggle for a *substantive change in the nature of power* that seems to be pursued by most of the world's grassroots populations, particularly since the old metanarratives have lost their appeal and the latest promises of an affluent world through globalisation have also shown to be nothing but impostures. Increasingly, more people are realising that their biophilic powers are their main riches and their most efficient tools of resistance to the new forms of domination.

This highly liberating awareness, however, also requires strategies of a different kind. Strategies that combine the *older, vernacular forms of wisdom* with the latest lessons drawn from *guerrilla types of action*. Strategies that take advantage of all the chinks and the cracks produced by the contradictions of the dominant system. Strategies that do not wait for the major or grand obstacles created by the existent systems of power. Strategies that are not binary or black and white, but borne of the common sense of people used to *walk in the dark*. Strategies that are plural, different, if not following opposite directions, depending on the context of one's action.



*When power is imbued with love, attention and respect for others, it generally leads to what is called the good. It changes, both its author and all the persons it touches, in ways that elevate them, bring up the divine in them. It transforms ordinary people into caring humans*

In such strategies, discourses and practices are also defined according to a culture specific common sense. As such, one's *friends* or *enemies* are not in one and separate *camps* or *sides*. They are everywhere. Nothing could therefore prevent one to choose her or his friends where one finds them. In my own experience, I have found some of my best friends in places that I expected them least. Perhaps the most rewarding strategy of action is for all the subjugated to follow the traditional common sense of spreading the seeds of one's truth in any available place, while remaining as clear as possible on the validity of that truth.

This is how, in my view, the Iranian women are already changing their society by taking full advantage of their particular form of power. As they are not present here, I would like to take the liberty of talking about them. Everyone knows the ordeals they have gone through, particularly in the last twenty years when in the name of religion, they have been systematically denied their rights to live as free individuals. Yet nothing seems to have stopped them from pursuing what they think is good when they are in a position to do it. No matter whether laws and men's attitudes treat them as semi-humans. Not only are they moving ahead like fishes in the social ocean but the thick, artificially created layers of ice that the dominant power has sought to create at various levels of this ocean are being systematically melted and decomposed as a result of their incredibly creative and penetrating actions.

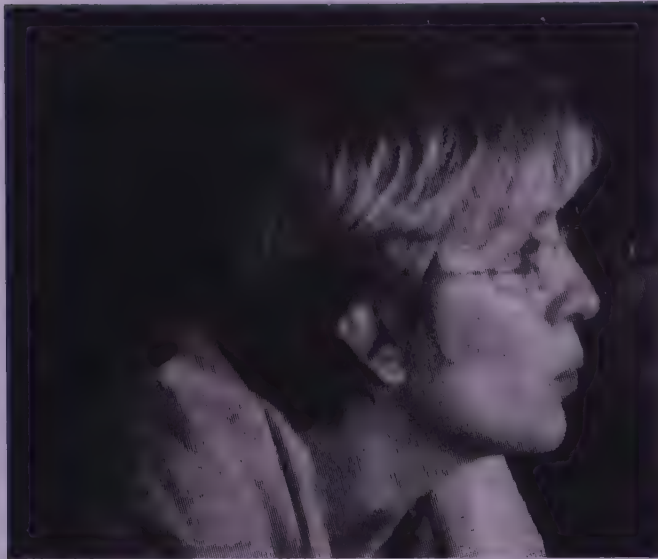
The last point I would like to raise is that when authentic power stems from persons who are sure of their truth, when such a power follows its own logic rather than submitting itself to the rules of the enemy, it is not obsessed by a predefined idea of time. Its purpose is to do what it can and what it should do in order to remain alive. As such, genuine power takes its own time. Actomania does not force it to produce immediate results.

*When the millions of iced particles reach the necessary temperature, nothing can prevent the whole layers of ice to thaw.*



As long as women have hope and  
a voice, there is never going to be  
peace for the oppressors

Vjosa Dobruna\*



I was privileged to be a member of the jury, the jury of wise men and women. Listening to you, I was thinking all the time - How can I be wise in front of all these wise women who have the courage to voice concerns, who had courage to come up publicly and tell us what's going on? Believe me, all the time I was listening, I was listening with pain. Despite the pain I saw among these women, I saw hope, too. I was listening because I was identifying things that I went through recently. Most of those things that happened to these women also happened to me and happened to women of my country. Two years ago I was a refugee. I worked in camps. For ten years I lived with apartheid, many times I was beaten. Like many people in my country, like many women in my country, for many years we developed a very good non-violent movement. While men opted for violence, women in Kosovo didn't. We continue to act non-violently. I was living in a camp. I saw death and I lost hope that I would ever go back home. It happened and back home I didn't find anything. *We found mass graves.* I continued going with my friends to find their children. I found my friends raped. I found my other friends missing. I found women who became hostages of war in Serbia. Some of them even delivered their babies in the jails of Serbia. But somehow we never lost hope. Maybe the motto, while we were living under apartheid, was *we want, we can and we'll do it* and in many ways we did it. But what impressed me with all the women's tribunals, I think the first one in Beijing when I didn't know Corinne, is that as long as women have hope and have voice there's always going to be a chance that there is never going to be peace for oppressors.

So I would like always to see women going forward and voicing their concern.  
Thank you.



**\*Vjosa** is a pediatrician by profession and human rights activist by passion. Fired from the state-run clinic because of her ethnic background during the process of mass firing of ethnic Albanians of Kosovo from their jobs in 1990, Vjosa's spirit to stand up to injustice only grew stronger.

She gained her reputation as a human rights activist through the founding of the Centre for the Protection of Women and Children in Prishtina in 1992 and subsequently in 1999 during exile in Macedonia, the Women's Centre in Tetova to support local and refugee women on health, human rights and psychosocial issues. After the war in Kosovo, she founded the Shelter for Women against Domestic Violence in Gjakova.

She was till recently co-head of the Department for Democratic Governance and Civil Society and a member of the Council of Ministers.



## We have all tasted freedom now and we can't go back

*Vjosa Dobruna*

*An interview*

*My name is Vjosa Dobruna and I am from Kosovo. It's a country that used to belong to former Yugoslavia. I was born there and continue to live there even though after I became a refugee, there were times when I thought I will never have a chance to go back home. My refugee period lasted three months. It lasted at a time when most of the people in the world recognised that there was war in Kosovo. But the war in Kosovo started much earlier. First it was some eight years of silent war. When I say silent I mean that it was not in the newspapers, it was not in the media broadcasting.*

*The Serbian regime had stripped Kosovo of its autonomy and then started firing almost every Kosovar Albanian who spoke the Albanian language, from their jobs. It included me as a doctor, a pediatrician only because I have a certain ethnic background. Silent war means we lived like that and nobody in the world wanted to hear about it. We didn't have a voice outside, our media was banned, we couldn't publish in our language, we didn't have T V, and we didn't have radio in our language; everything was in the minority Serbian language; hospitals were closed for Kosovar Albanians; children and women were dying; and all this in the middle of Europe.*

*Until 1998, the entire population of Kosovo opted for non-violence as a way to combat this repression. We lived separately and in strict apartheid. The minority Serbian and majority Albanian population. We didn't communicate. Only the police, the special security forces communicated with people. As many as eight hundred thousand Kosovar Albanians were interrogated, beaten several times, even in peaceful demonstrations. We lived a life of not even second grade people, more third grade people without any rights including even the right to live, right to speak our mother tongue in public, right to have schools in our language, to go to hospitals, to use hospital facilities. For eight years it was not possible to go to swimming pools, to use the swimming pool.*

*In 1998, some young men of Kosovo, mostly from the rural areas started, as we say in Albanian, returning the gun to Serbs. They start fighting back with weapons. In the first year of the war, now I call this the loud war, we had many dead people but 43% of all the dead people were women and children. Forty three percent, not young men from the Kosovo Liberation Army, but women and children. Most of the population became refugees in our own country.*

*In March 1999, after the old negotiations failed, Serbia didn't want to sign any agreement at all. NATO forces attacked from the air, attacked Kosovo and Serbia in order to force the Serbian forces to stop ethnic cleansing and to stop the genocide towards Albanian population. I remember the night when the bombing started. We already had fewer men in the population. We didn't have fighters in the towns. It was 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1999 and I never imagined we would be glad to hear bombs falling in Kosovo. But it happened and we were hiding in the basement of our building. The first bomb fell and we cheered, that finally somebody came to help us. It was around 1'o clock in the morning when my phone rang and we are still in the basement. Now it's the 25<sup>th</sup> of March and we are some 50 people in the basement, small basement, when I received the phone call. They told me that the special police forces were burning my hometown and they had executed several doctors and several human rights activists. I received another phone call, which said that, a friend of mine who used to be an activist in the Council for Defence of Human Rights and Freedom (ten years now we used to work there together), he and his two children were taken from their home and probably executed. His wife who is also a human rights activist told me that the special police force came, took her sons from the bed and told them to kiss her. I didn't want to hide anymore and I knew that they were collecting everybody. I went to my apartment at about 3.10 in the morning when two men from my building came to me and told me that the Special Forces were coming for me, after me. I didn't want to leave because I hadn't done anything. What I did was taking care of women and children in Kosovo, going to the mountains twice, three times a week. While we were discussing this at the door, I saw a police car stop. I saw in the lights of the car, people with black uniforms and masks on their faces start running. From my door we can see the main door of the building. I just closed the door, jumped through the balcony and in a minute was in the basement of the next building. I spent the night there until 9'o clock the next morning. Next morning, people started walking through the streets. My sister came there, brought me some shoes and we mixed with other people in the street. I went to my friend to spend the night. Bombing was going on again and my friends heard that the police had gone several times to search for me in my apartment. They were afraid. They said, I am sorry. If you stay here you are risking the life of my children.*



*So next day, I went to another place, another basement where about 30-35 people were hiding. They too couldn't go out of the neighbourhood and were moving through different buildings. I spent the evening and the night there in the basement. The people were frightened and said "if they are searching for you and if you stay on here, they will find you here and execute you". Executions were going on every night and everyday. They were searching for activists and killing them; nobody could even see the bodies the next day. The bodies of my friend from Council for Defence of Human Rights and Freedom and the two children were found out of town. So everybody who was an activist and everybody who knew that they were going to be in the list were hiding. So then I went to another friend who is not a Kosovar Albanian but a Kosovar Turk. I thought maybe they would not come to search there. However there were two other activists there and now we were afraid that if they come to catch one, they would find three of us.*

*So I moved again, moved until the seventh night when I felt had enough. I said I am risking people's lives and everybody is afraid of me. And so I ask my sister to drive me home because I didn't know what was happening with my parents. We were going in the little narrow streets in the old part of the town to go to my apartment. About 50 metres before we reached the apartment, the police surrounded our car and started hitting it with baseball sticks forcing us to stop. They took my brother-in-law from the car and started beating him. They ask him for his name which ofcourse is Albanian. They were hitting him and he was trying to protect his head. But they were hitting him so much that he began to bleed. This was the regular police and not the special police. I was at the back and they start hitting me too, but not very hard. I had this child who was 11 months old, who on purpose, I had kept at the back. They told us to give money. They saw I had a bracelet that they took along with my money. And then they took my sister's ring – one earring, her wedding ring. She had some gold and some money. After we gave money and our gold, they let us go but they didn't let us go home. We were afraid to say, "I am going home, and this is my home". And they didn't ask us. They just told us to go straight, down the street. And, I was afraid to say that no I want to go home. Because, if I say I wanted to go home they would ask me for my name and if they asked me my name then I would get arrested. So we didn't say anything.*

While we were going down the street on the right side, anyhow we couldn't go any other way because they had put tanks at all the crossroads, we saw crowds of people in a corner who recognised us, but we didn't know what was going on. When we reached the end of town there was no road on our right side on which we could escape, so we went left and left and went to a circle. It is an entrance to the town, the road to go to Macedonia. We open the windows and we hear people screaming and we ask what is going on. They say, They are not letting us go home. They are going building by building, home by home and taking people out. Whoever had a car, got into it and escaped, while those who didn't were taken to the station. So there are entire parts of the town where there are no more Albanians. We get into this line, which is about 20kms long. We were four in the car – my brother-in-law who could hardly drive, my sister, their son and me. We start picking people. We pick up two women with a child and then as we are going to the border we pick up another woman. So at one point we were four women with two children at the back of the small car and we reach the border that we cannot cross since the Macedonian side has closed it. So now we are in a line that is 20-30 kms – three lines of cars. We had to stay there for 56 hours with no food for the baby. My sister had a small glass of juice that she always kept in her bag. The first night we were not allowed to get out of the car but near the car we saw a bottle. Somebody had thrown the bottle with the water. We saw it during the day but we couldn't open the door to take it. In the night, she opened the door, took the bottle and poured that juice in that bottle of mineral water and that's how we fed this child for 56 hours – only that water with one small baby juice.

What kind of democracy  
are we trying to build in  
Kosovo where people's  
will cannot be defined and  
respected!

During the night they used to come, knock on the door and take the men and women out. Many men disappeared. We never saw those men anymore. Women were made to strip completely. Many women were taken and raped and it was random. They would just come, open the door and take the men out. If they resisted little, they would arrest them. But if you had money left you would give money and buy your stay there.

Till today, even though they say Serbia has voted out Milosevic it hasn't become democratic. They are still keeping prisoners of war. They are still not apologising for what was done to Kosovar Albanians. They are still not giving information about the bodies of thousands and thousands and thousands of people. Sometimes mothers find the heads of their girls who were raped in front of them and then killed but they cannot find the bodies. There is some information that there are many bodies buried in the mines of Kosovo. But UN now, administers Kosovo and Kosovars don't have a voice.



**What is really happening now with the so-called interim government? What is the process? And what do you feel about it?**

*In June, NATO was deployed in Kosovo. By the end of June, beginning July the UN came and they start administering Kosovo according to Resolution 1244 of the Security Council and practically start organising our lives. They didn't recognise any institution that Kosovar Albanians had built for ten years. They decided by regulation that those institutions don't exist. They disarmed the Kosovo Liberation Army and they started everything from the beginning in Kosovo that was strange for us. Kosovar Albanians had lived a century under Serbian occupation. The last ten years was just the last phase of the harshest repression. Even though Kosovo was ethnically cleansed from Albanians three to four times during this century, it was not called by this name before.*

*When the UN started administering Kosovo, we began to have a very strange feeling, that once again our voices were not being heard. For practically 6 months, we did not have a say at all. On 15<sup>th</sup> of December 1999, the new regulation, which said that all the structures that existed in Kosovo would cease to exist voluntarily, was signed by the special representative of the Secretary General, Dr Kushnev. He started a new administrative structure, called Joint Interim Administrative Structure of Kosovo (JIASK) which is composed of 20 ministerial departments; each department run by one international and one national Kosovar. I co-headed one of these departments which is called Department for Multi Governance and Civil Society, the only independent non-party affiliated ministry. All the rest belong to three main political parties – two are representatives of the Serbian ethnic community, two are of the other ethnic community, one is Bosnian Muslim, one is Turkish; so it is pretty fair. Out of the twenty, twenty five percent are ministers headed by ethnic groups in Kosovo who represent five percent of the population of Kosovo. Until now we all worked according to the regulation that came from the Resolution 1244. Now we are in the process of working on a new legal framework. It's not what the Kosovar population wants. The Kosovo population wants a constitution. We used to have, prior to 1989, a constitution. We were a State. We feel deprived of independence and what we are fighting now is our right to self-determination. But right now there is no sign that the UN Security Council is going to grant us the right to self-determination. What kind of democracy are we trying to build in Kosovo where people's will cannot be defined and respected!*

**How long will this transition go on?**

*There is no time frame. It is going to last long. It was started with a great willingness and with good intentions. But somewhere Kosovars were forgotten and Resolution 1244 is being read depending on how and who wants to read it – from Security Council members, international community, different factions of the international community.*

*I was a devoted pacifist until 1999. In October, when NATO struck against Serbia I was one of the few people in Kosovo who was against that. In March 1999, for me every bomb was music because it was unbearable anymore. And we knew that if NATO didn't strike we were all going to die. The Serbian regime didn't kill us all but they made us refugees. I am not a pacifist anymore. If our non-violence was supported by the world, Kosovo would have been a good example.*

*Until they start massacres and there was blood on television, nobody reacted to Kosovo. It is the same situation again. UN tried to bring us back, because according to Resolution 1244, we are part of Yugoslavia. We are not part of Yugoslavia and we are never going to be. I have tasted freedom now. We all have tasted freedom and we can't go back. I don't believe that Serbia is going to respect the rights of anybody. This is a country that launched four wars and still does not comply with international laws. They have not given Milosevic over to the Hague Tribunal. They are not releasing hostages of war. How can I trust them?*

**What is the UN doing about it?**

*The UN protested. NATO does not have the power to do that because it is responsible for security in Kosovo and not responsible for Serbia. This is a military organisation. UN should do more. It is not enough just to have a resolution. It is about backing that resolution.*

**How are Kosovars responding to this?**

*Kosovars have again become a nation of protestors. We are again in the streets protesting for missing persons, again in the streets protesting to release prisoners of war, again protesting to have our voice being heard, again protesting that we want to participate. It is about our life and we are again protesting that we want to be part of the reconstruction of our country. It is not somebody else who has to make decision. I have a taste of freedom and it is great. I want to decide about my life. I need more. It is not enough.*

*Thank you.*

(The interview was conducted by Chalam Bennurakar from AWHRC, an independent documentary filmmaker on the occasion of the World Court of Women against War, for Peace )





Returning to the path of our grandmothers,  
walking in the vision of our cultures  
*Mililani B. Trask\**



I want to thank the indigenous peoples of this land for welcoming the World Court to their homeland and for making a place at your table for us.

I want to thank the women of the ANC for the generous and gracious hospitality they have extended to the Court in Cape Town and in the Parliament.

I want to recognise and acknowledge the sponsors of the World Court, El Taller and the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, for their selfless dedication and for their incredible effort in sponsoring this Global Court for all of the women of the world who suffer violence and whose stories have been brought into the public eye so that justice might be done.

Finally and most importantly, I want to express my profound thanks and appreciation to the women whose testimonies were presented to the jurists and the Court. Your strength uplifts us; your integrity reaffirms our commitment to this undertaking. The truth you have spoken has exposed the *global culture of violence*, which is maintained and perpetuated by a *veil of silence*.

You have challenged us all to reject the old paradigm of power and violence through the various forms of bias, ignorance, racism, sexism, militarisation and globalisation.

\*A native Hawaiian attorney, **Mililani Trask** has served two consecutive four year terms as the Kia'aina ( President) of Ka Lahui Hawaii, the Sovereign Hawaiian Nation. A member of the Indigenous Initiative for Peace created by Rigoberta Menchu in 1993, she has also been a jurist on the Pacific Court of Women held in Aotearoa in September 1999.

The collective testimonies received, including the submittals in video and the artistic submissions, confirm undeniably that violence against women and their communities is at an epidemic level throughout the world. Violence against women in some regions has taken the covert form of armed struggle and militarism. In some instances, violence results from the imposition of governmental and private sector policies by states and transitional corporations who try to minimise violence against women by characterising violence in the sanitised language of *structural adjustment* and *economic boycott or benefit*. Such policies seek to *personalise* issues relating to systemic violence and constitutionalised racism and sexism in order to relegate these political injustices to the realm of the domestic.

Through resilient testimonies received by the Court, we see that women's human rights cannot be privatised, individualised or domesticated either under national or international law. Current trends in the economic and political arenas maintain the *old masculine paradigm*, which favours *consumption, exclusivity and militarism*. This is our greatest challenge. To replace the old paradigm not with a new paradigm but with *the first paradigm - the paradigm of the feminine*. Women from traditional matrilineal cultures have kept the knowledge needed to return balance to the world in which we live.

The indigenous women's worldview stands in stark contrast to the patterns of globalisation. Our traditional grandmothers recalled the original instructions of the Creator - to live as a *guardian of the sacred earth*, honouring all life forms.

The culture of violence survives because of the culture of silence - silence imposed by militarism and maintained by poverty, illness, ignorance and fear. The Global Court of Women convened in South Africa is organised to reject the silence imposed by the old paradigm and to expose to the light of political day the inhumanity of globalisation and economic colonisation. The elders who have testified have shown us the way to proceed.

Our goal is a simple one. It begins by *decolonising our minds*, by examining our own habits and lifestyles and by changing the behaviour patterns, which have been assimilated into our lives and which reinforce the old paradigm of violence. Then, we must return to the path of our grandmothers, *walking in the vision of our cultures*, utilising culturally appropriate technology that is environmentally safe and for the benefit of all life forms. In this way, we will maintain the diverse cultures of the world.

It is easy to make war. It is difficult to cultivate peace. *The way to peace is the way of life*. Women, who are the mothers of children, know the value of life. Women are also the mothers of cultures and the mothers of nations. As women, we must now work to birth justice and to bring forth new nations founded on principles of peace and equanimity. The natural process of birth is difficult - it comes with pain and bloodshed.

We recall the wisdom of our grandmothers that *a difficult birth does not make the baby any less beautiful*.





## An economy based on the manufacture and testing of weapons can only lead to war

Aicha Ech-channa\*



*As* a member of the jury of the *World Court of Women against War, for Peace* in Cape Town, I listened carefully to the testimonies of the women who came from all over the world. They all shared one common experience-that of violence; violence in different forms. Violence has no nationality; it is regrettably international. Violence exists in all spheres, be it social, domestic, conjugal, legal (disparity under the law between men and women), politics or economics. This violence against women has serious effects on society. The woman who gives life and raises her children (girls and boys) deserves the attention of societies throughout the world. If we add up the number of years women have suffered and resisted, we would find ourselves with centuries of feminine resistances that history has to remember for the future generations, for the conscious prevention of conflicts.

Most importantly, the Court was able to gather women who came from countries of conflicts who were able to listen to each other and devote themselves to humanity. It is proof that women have the power of wisdom, certainly bound to their roles as mothers, which, above all, is to give and protect life.

This Court has to be a space for women to advocate to national and international bodies that have the duty to build a more just and humane society.

Through the World Court an appeal was sent to the big powers to be conscious of the fact that *an economy based on the manufacture and testing of weapons can only lead to war*.

Occidental democratic systems are pressurising their government not to stop economic production so as to maintain jobs for their electorate.

The choice to hold this Court in Cape Town is very significant, as it is a symbol of forgiveness and peace where Mister Mandela is the charismatic Leader.

With my sincere greetings.

\*Born in the Medina of Casablanca, **Aicha Ech-channa** for the past 35 years has thrown herself into the struggle for rights of the marginalised, the women. She has initiated many campaigns to stop violence against women and children and to provide health care and education to all Moroccans. She has also initiated the Women's Solidarity Association, which takes care of single mothers. In Morocco hers has been one of the rare voices breaking the silence surrounding issues of personal violence against women and children – like rape and domestic violence, issues that are considered taboo in South Africa. She is the author of "Miseria", a book of testimonies, gathering tales and stories of suffering and pain of women and children. The book was awarded the Grand Atlas prize in 1998.

## Genocide and crimes against humanity committed by the UN itself should be condemned and stopped

*Dennis J. Halliday\**



Today - after listening to the many courageous testimonies of crimes and atrocities committed against women by men or patriarchal systems - it is very painful to be a man standing before hundreds of women this evening. I am disgusted and angry at what I have heard. It may mean very little, but I feel the need to apologise - too little, too late and presumptuous although it may be. As a man, representing men, I beg your forgiveness for the many crimes we have committed, and continue to commit, against women and girls - our daughters and those yet born - as we men continue to corrupt the world that we should be serving and sharing with women through caring and love.


My fellow jurors have spoken about the tragedies that women face everyday - from dowry killing to rape, from genocide to trafficking, from embargoes to endless poverty, from the lack of civil and political human rights to the neglect of the fundamental rights. We must recognise that when one woman's human rights are abused, the human rights of all of us are abused. When one sister, one daughter is denied her human rights, we are all denied. As individual women have shown us today, we must be courageous; we must speak out; we must all be involved. We must never give up. The pain, the agony of those denied, must be our pain, if there is to be change in the future.



**\*Dennis Halliday**, former United Nations Assistant Secretary General, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq during 1997-98 and an Irish National, resigned from the UN after a thirty year career to protest and be free to speak publicly on the deadly impact of the ten year UN Security Council embargo on the people of Iraq.

He has been campaigning courageously among parliamentarians and the public to bring about foreign policy changes that will force the USA and UK to end the embargo; to find alternative ways for the Security Council to work with Iraq in the best interests of its people in an attempt to seek more humane and just ways to regional and world peace.





*Women cannot continue to tolerate a UN culpable of double standards and actions breeching its own Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

We have heard about chemical weapons - used against the Kurds, the Vietnamese, the Cambodians and many others. We must deplore such weapons and their inhuman and illegal usage - just as we must deplore nuclear weapons use and testing. We must express our outrage at the use of depleted uranium in the Gulf War by the USA and Britain and its use again by NATO in Kosovo despite the evidence of massive increases in the incidence of leukemia and other cancers in Iraq. *Good women must step in where we men have failed and demand an end to the sale of such conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction.* Such wasted expenditures need to be diverted immediately to crises such as poverty, environmental damage, HIV/AIDS and the issues and crimes that crush women and their families everywhere.

Women must demand and seize leadership in the United Nations and international institutions, in domestic politics at the national level. In particular, women parliamentarians must begin to dictate where budgetary expenditures should go, demand changes in wastage of military budgets, change attitudes and introduce solutions to global needs. *We must have new beginnings.* Women must stand up and act.

We have heard today of genocide - I think of my own country (Ireland) with its 19th century experience of genocide. We have heard today of genocide of indigenous people in Australia, in the Americas and the Pacific. We have heard of genocide in Africa, in the occupied territories of Palestine, and in Iraq due to the UN embargo. Often we talk of genocide resulting from neglect by or support from the member states of the United Nations Security Council led by the permanent members: USA, Russia, Britain, China and France. *Women must step forward and demand that genocide and crimes against humanity committed by the UN itself be condemned and stopped.* We men seem to be incapable of doing that. Perhaps our fragile male macho self-image gets in the way; or our insecurity when threatened by good and competent women who exhibit the capacity for the correct action combined with success.

Women must demand reform of the United Nations, particularly of the Security Council where the five permanent and veto holding countries close their eyes to crimes and genocide - a Council where these same five members manufacture and sell 80% of the weapons of mass destruction and military arms often to the nations of the South, thereby taking money from health care, education, housing and decent employment. This diversion must end. We must have a Council where the South is properly represented with permanent seats and involved in all decision making. We must see that the Security Council's Resolution 1235 is implemented so that decisions in the future benefit gender balance in addition to north and south balance. Women must be elected; they must take leadership and end their collective and individual silence. Women must stand up to issues whether they are domestic violence, nuclear weapons, employment or environmental degradation.

We cannot accept a United Nations that neglects the killing of Palestinians in their own country; the killing of thousands of Iraqi children every month; the genocide of indigenous peoples; and ethnic cleansing around the world. Women cannot continue to tolerate a UN culpable of double standards and actions breaching its own Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women must learn to push the male decision-makers aside. We cannot have a UN that accepts in full knowledge death and torture in the *Al Khayan* prison in South Lebanon. There cannot be a UN that turns its back on the genocide in Rwanda. *The Court of Women against War, for Peace must not tolerate such a United Nations.*

The world requires that women convert national and international institutions into places of caring and understanding that focus on the real needs of human beings - the sharing of resources, equitable income distribution, poverty, housing for the homeless, crime and all the forms of violence.

The well being of all must be our focus, not war, not capitalist greed, not unequal globalisation, not exploitation of the many by the few, not racism, and not the exclusion of Dalit women in South Asia. Women need to create a global family of humankind - the kind of family we expect of our mothers, often under near impossible circumstances. We need the *practical common sense, the caring and the courage* that many of the women of South Africa have shown in ending the white regime of apartheid. The world needs this kind of approach if it is to survive.

As Pun Srey Leak of Cambodia told the court – *it is the little people who suffer - the poor, the landless, the weak and the most vulnerable.* Together, good men and women must stop this suffering. There is no excuse - there is no justification for the many forms of violence that we have heard. Women can ensure that people share and live together in harmony. We must invest in people and we must plan with that goal in mind.

We men have failed. As Archbishop Tutu said – *men should be pushed aside and got out of the way.*

Women must do more than dream. Women must implement change. *Women must take action to the wise use of power.* Time is running out just as it has run out already for so many millions of women and children, as Vandana Shiva said. *You (women) must take back your lives.* We men must learn to work along side you and support you. You may be able to forgive many of the crimes committed against you, but you must not forget the pain. Remembering the pain is essential for going forward effectively in seeking and making a better world for us all - a world of peace, justice and harmony. Thenjiwe Mtintso of South Africa said – *let us (women) take strength from the testimonies we have given. Not only sadness.*

Indeed let us take strength and move forward together - women and men both. We will win. Victory is on our side. In the words of Susanna Ounei of the Kanak Islands, Aotearoa – *we will win - never give up.*

The women of the world must never give up.

Thank you.





Our ills are centered in the  
economic scourge of capitalism,  
structured on colonisation  
and now globalisation

*Fatima Meer\**



*We* have listened to the testimonies of women whose societies are ravaged by wars and whose lives are destroyed by the exploitation of their sheer sexuality.

We have listened to the Palestinian women who have lost their country, their homes and their friends through an unjust act to which the UNO was a party. They were literally driven out of their country while the civilised northern world watched and concurred. That initial injustice is compounded today with Israel superimposing on Palestine and the Palestinians by and large transformed into refugees and nomads. We have heard the testimony of the Palestinian matriarch who held up the key to her family home and vowed she would return. The years are moving ahead, and although her physical life appears to be dimming, the hope in her soul shines bright. She will overcome; she has to overcome.

We have heard the testimonies of women destroyed by the sexual appetites of men, and then blamed for those appetites; women ostracised and destroyed by the shame and the guilt that society imposes on them.

We have heard the testimonies of young girls violated by the cruel custom of circumcision. There were the testimonies of women, crushed in the European war zone, of refugees roaming the African continent never allowed to put down roots, violated as aliens and forced into prostitution. The listening has been painful. We cannot even begin to imagine the pain of the actual experience, the raw brutality of the cruelty of man against man, of man against woman, of human against human.

\* Deeply committed to and active in the South African struggle against apartheid, **Fatima Meer** has survived imprisonment and assassination attempts. She continues to be committed to struggles against injustice and poverty. Among other organisations she has been involved with, she has set up the Institute for Black Research whose main activities are women's skill training and publishing books of writers from disenfranchised communities. She has also initiated the Durban Citizens Initiative, a group working in townships on poverty and rights programmes.

You have given us words and we value those words for their reality and their integrity.

We thank God for Corinne Kumar - the genius, her imagination and outreach that have resulted in this World Court of Women against War, for Peace. We can never sufficiently emphasise that our ills are centered in the economic scourge of capitalism, structured on colonialism and now on globalisation.

The common feature of these testimonies was that the women were not self-centered as individuals or as a gender; their focus was on their families, on their communities, which were victimised by violence and war.

We heard thousands of important words. Their power can never be underestimated; they will remain with us, to compel us into action that relieves and rejuvenates.

*In the beginning was God  
Today is God  
Tomorrow will be God  
He has no body  
He is as a word, which comes out of your mouth  
That word! It is no more  
It is past, and still it lives  
So is God.*

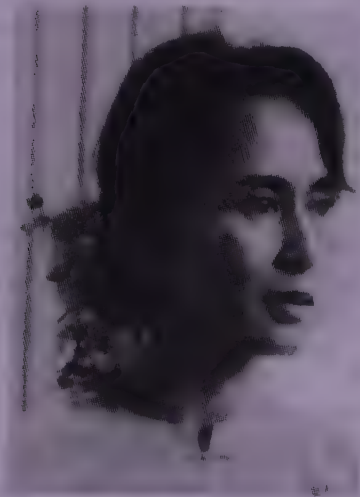
[Mbiti, John S., Concepts of God in Africa, S.P.C.K., Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone Road, London, NW1, 1970]







## Message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi\*



**\*Aung San Suu Kyi**, a Nobel Peace Laureate of 1991, was cited by the Nobel Committee as "one of the most extraordinary examples of civil courage in Asia in recent decades." She was educated at Delhi University and Oxford University. She has won numerous awards and honours in addition to the Nobel Peace Prize, most notably the Rafto Human Rights Prize and the Sakharov Prize. She is the general secretary and leader of Burma's National League for Democracy and was placed under house arrest till recently by the military junta in July of 1989 for her activities.

Influenced by the legacy of her father, Aung San Suu Kyi began her public support of her country's struggle for democracy and human rights on August 26, 1988.

*Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi has been confined under strict house arrest in her home in Rangoon since September. She has only been allowed three visits from visiting UN and EU diplomats, and restricted access to the members of her party.*

*In an indirect message conveyed by a confidential source, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi regrets not being able to communicate with the participants of the World Court of Women. She sends her solidarity and warm wishes to all participants and organisers. She also wishes the participants and organisers every success in their efforts for peace.*

## Voice of Hope

*Aung San Suu Kyi in conversation with Alan Clements*

Burma's opposition leader talks of faith, hope, money and the power of the powerless in Burma

**Alan Clements:** Daw Suu, what would you say are the main characteristics of the Burmese people – an amazingly diverse culture with over 64 indigenous races and 200 different languages and dialects?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: I can't talk as far as the ethnic peoples are concerned, that would be a presumption on my part. I can only talk about the ethnic Burman majority, because that's what I am. There are a great number of ethnic groups in Burma and the Burman are just one of them – the biggest group, we are of Tibeto-Burman stock. I have not studied the cultures of the other ethnic peoples of Burma deeply enough to comment on them, apart from the fact that my mother always taught me to think of them as very close to us, emphasising how loyal they were. She always spoke of them with great respect and warmth.*

*About the Burmese in Burma, the first thing that comes to mind is the fact that they are Buddhists. But also the fact that not every Burmese is a good Buddhist. Another aspect of the Burmese is that they are a colourful people. I see them in Technicolor, as it were; I think the Burmese do go in not just for colourful clothes but also colourful emotions.*

**Alan Clements:** I think many people in the West tend to have a stereotypical notion of Southeast Asian countries, especially the less developed nations, as mysterious, alien nations 10,000 miles from our shores. While others often generalise these countries as lands drenched in decades of horror and blood; the wars in Vietnam and Laos, Pol Pot's genocide in Cambodia, Ne Win's 30-odd year brutal dictatorship in your own country and of course, SLORC's ongoing repression. What do you think the common bonds between Burma and western countries are?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: Well, our colonial legacy cannot be denied, whether we like it or not. The great majority of existing laws in Burma as well as our educational system were introduced and influenced by the colonial government. The schools, hospitals and railways – all these trappings of colonialism, came to Burma through a western power. Apart from that, I think the Burmese in general are by nature a tolerant race and also very open to other cultures and ideas. But we have been made intolerant by the authoritarian system which has been imposed upon us.*



**Alan Clements:** It's a matter of debate, but politics and religion are usually segregated issues. In Burma today; the large portion of monks and nuns see spiritual freedom and socio-political freedom as separate areas. But, in truth, dharma and politics are rooted in the same issue – freedom.

*Aung San Suu Kyi: Indeed, but this is not unique to Burma. Everywhere you'll find this drive to separate the secular from the spiritual. In other Buddhist countries you'll find the same thing – in Thailand, Sri Lanka, in Mahayana Buddhist countries, in Christian countries, almost everywhere in the world. I think some people find it embarrassing and impractical to think of the spiritual and political life as one. I do not see them as separate. In democracies there is always a drive to separate the spiritual from the secular, but it is not actually required to separate them. Whereas, in many dictatorships, you'll find that there is an official policy to keep politics and religion apart, in case, I suppose, it is used to upset the status quo.*

**Alan Clements:** Burma has a long history of monks and nuns being actively engaged in political areas when it concerns the welfare of the people. With the crisis at such a critical moment, do you think that the Sangha – the order of monks and nuns – can play a greater role in supporting the democracy movement? After all, it's their freedom too.

*Aung San Suu Kyi: Well, there are a lot of monks and nuns who have played a very courageous role in our movement for democracy. Ofcourse, I would like to see everybody taking a much more significant role in the movement, not just monks and nuns. After all, there is nothing in democracy that any Buddhist could object to. I think that monks and nuns, like everybody else, have a duty to promote what is good and desirable. And I do think they could be more reflective. In fact, they should help as far as they can. I do believe in 'engaged Buddhism', to use a modern term.*

**Alan Clements:** How might they be more effective?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: Simply by preaching democratic principles, by encouraging everybody to work for democracy and human rights, and by trying to persuade the authorities to begin dialogue. It would be a great help if every monk and nun in the country were to say, 'What we want to see is dialogue.' After all, that is the way of the Buddha. He encouraged the Sangha to talk to each other. He said, 'You can't live like dumb animals. And if you have offended each other, you expiate your sins and offences by confessing them and apologizing.'*

**Alan Clements:** President Mandela writes in his autobiography *A long Walk to Freedom* that in 1961 'the days of non-violent struggle were over... We had no choice but to turn to violence.' To substantiate his turn away from non-violence to violence he cited an old African expression, 'The attacks of the wild beast cannot be averted only with bare hands.' Nevertheless, there were some within the ANC who argued that non-violence was an inviolate principle, not a tactic that should be abandoned when it no longer worked. To this Mr. Mandela countered: '[I] believed exactly the opposite..non-violence was a tactic that should be abandoned when it no longer worked... And it was wrong and immoral to subject our people to armed attacks by the state without offering them some kind of alternative.' But, if I am correct, you see non-violent political activism as a moral and spiritual principle and not merely as a political tactic?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: No, not exactly. It's also a political tactic. Military coups, which have happened enough in Burma, are violent ways of changing situations and I do not want to encourage and to perpetuate this tradition of bringing about change through violence. Because I'm afraid that if we achieve democracy in this way we will never be able to get rid of the idea that you bring about necessary changes through violence. The very method would be threatening us all the time. Because there are always people who do not agree with democracy. And if we achieve it through violent means, there will be the hard core of those who have always been against the democracy movement who will think, 'It was through violence that they changed the system and if we can develop our own methods of violence which are superior to theirs, we can get back the power.' And we'll go on in this vicious cycle. For me it is as much a political tactic as a spiritual belief, that violence is not the right way. It would simply not assist us in building up a strong democracy.*

*We have always said that we will never disown those students and others who have taken up violence. We know that their aim is the same as ours. They want democracy and they think the best way to go about it is through armed struggle. And we do not say that we have the monopoly on the right methods of achieving what we want. Also, we cannot guarantee their security. We can't say, 'Follow us in the way of non-violence and you'll be protected,' or that we'll get there without any casualties. That's a promise we can't make. We have chosen the way of non-violence simply because we think it's politically better for the country in the long run to establish that you can bring about change without the use of arms. This has been a clear NLD policy from the beginning.*



**Alan Clements:** The SLORC chairman, General Than Shwe, has been in Bangkok attending the ASEAN [Association of South-East Asian Nations] conference at the invitation of Thailand. Often, such conferences as this one neglect the role of 'human rights' for the sake of economic interests, which generally means self-interest. Take for example the American administration's policy towards China. What do you think of this need of some world leaders to separate money and profits from people and human values?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: It's a totally artificial separation.*

**Alan Clements:** But why do you think so many political leaders insist on this 'artificial' separation as a matter of firm national policy?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: It's because certain systems which are not what one would call wholly democratic have achieved economic success. There has come about a school of thought that economic success is totally divorced from political freedoms. But, I think, there are other reasons for economic success. Take Singapore for example. I think there are two basic reasons for their economic success. One is that they have had a government which is not corrupt. Nobody can accuse them of corruption. They may not be wholly democratic in the way in which some of us see democracy but they are not corrupt. Secondly, they have put a great value on education and have done everything they can to raise its standard. So I think it's wrong to equate Singapore's economic success to the fact that it's not wholly a democracy. It makes much more sense to link its success to the fact that it has an intelligent, upright government, along with an excellent educational system. I think we're getting our values and equations wrong.*

**Alan Clements:** Certain business people and politicians argue that investment in Burma is good because it creates a middle class and, therefore, the most expedient way to usher in democracy. How would you respond to this argument?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: Investments in Burma during the last seven years [from the time of SLORC taking power] have done nothing to create a stronger middle class. There are a few people who have got very rich, and a rapidly increasing pool of the very poor. The great majority of civil servants, who should normally be part of the middle class, are struggling to get on with their lives. Their salaries are so low compared to the cost of living they have to choose between corruption and starvation.*

**Alan Clements:** SLORC presents a grotesquely inaccurate picture of reality in your country to its own people. No-one believes SLORC's newspaper or television reports. The vast majority of the population today rely on your weekend talks for the truth and analysis of the facts. Are tapes and videos of your talks getting out into the rural areas?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: I believe so. But people can learn the truth in a variety of ways. For example, everybody was very grateful because the official Burmese media broadcast the whole speech of their ambassador to the United Nations. It gave them a chance to find out what was actually in the resolution (laughing). Otherwise, they would not have known. So truth 'won out' in some way or another.*

**Alan Clements:** We discussed earlier how insecurity was the root psychology of authoritarian regimes – a mistrust of one's own dignity, one's self-worth, and therefore a mistrust of others. I would like to ask you about finding power in vulnerability, rather than seeing it as a weakness. From where does true power originate?

*Aung San Suu Kyi: The 'power of the powerless' as Vaclav Havel said. I think power comes from within. If you have confidence in what you are doing and you are shored up by the belief that what you are doing is right, that in itself constitutes power, and this power is very important when you are trying to achieve something. If you don't believe in what you are doing, your actions will lack credibility. However hard you try, inconsistencies will appear.*

**Alan Clements:** I know that you have a high regard for President Havel. May I ask how he has influenced you as a leader?

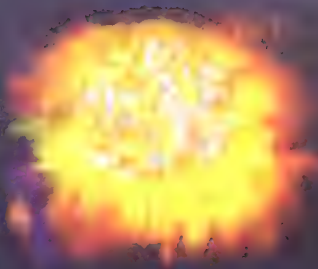
*Aung San Suu Kyi: Well, I've read his writings of course. He has really affected me indirectly, in the sense that it's what he wrote about how it was in Czechoslovakia was the intellectual honesty that some of the best people maintained. They would rather be plumbers, road workers, street-cleaners and bricklayers, than compromise their intellectual integrity by joining a university or the government. They accepted the superiority of the mind over the body and placed the importance of intellectual integrity far above that of material comfort. That has inspired me a great deal, and I think this is a wonderful example of what you can achieve when you try to maintain your spiritual and intellectual integrity.*

**Source:** Index on Censorship 3/97





*I have no  
definite tomorrow only a longing that  
I will write to pick out lights  
that cast curious shadows in the dark*



*Full of the Faith, 2000, 45" x 37"  
Designed, machine pieced and  
quilted by Geroldyn A. Mays,  
Jackson, Mississippi*

## Events around the Court



*Dahomey Wall Hanging,  
2000, 61" x 12"  
Hand-appliqued by the Frances Aho Group  
in Benin, West Africa.  
Machine-sewn on black material (68" x 17½").*

*While the World Court and the Roundtables that preceded it were held from March 6-8, 2001 there were a number of events organised around it that sought to reach out to the public of Cape Town and include them in the experience and issues of the Court through creative forms of interaction. The events included *Testimony through Art*, a Quilt exhibition; *Lines of Violation*, an art installation on comfort women, a festival of films on war, *Women in Black* and the *Caravans of Women*. While the first four events were held simultaneous to the Court, the *Caravans of Women* were held in different countries and regions on the months prior to the court as part of the preparatory processes.*



## Inheritance

*I come from people  
Who know love  
Who gather around fire and drum  
Under the curve of African sky*



*My people know music  
On canvas  
With instruments  
And feet.  
These are people whose voices  
Have been flung as gifts  
To stars and sun*

*I come from people  
Who know how to cradle each other,  
Who grow flowers,  
Tell stories,  
Gather to share food from three legged pots  
People who have sung, danced, toyi-toyied  
Through pain  
Unrecorded  
Unacknowledged  
Unseen*

*But let this be heard*

*I come from people  
Who can proudly lay claim  
In scattered documents, photographs  
and word...  
to a history  
of knowing what it feels like  
to come through generations  
of understanding love*

*shelley barry*

Poem rendered by the poet during the  
opening ceremony of Testimony through Art.





## Testimony through Art



*D*edicated to the many women who brought their testimonies of violence and war to the World Court of Women against War, for Peace; to the women who brought their testimonies of resistance in their search for justice and peace; to the women who refused to turn against their dreams; to all the quilt makers and to the stories they tell, for they are indeed the special storytellers of all times, this very special exhibition of quilts and tapestries sought to add multiple dimensions and perspective to the testimonies on the violence against women and resistance of women.



Curated by Roland Freeman of the Group for Cultural Documentation and organised in collaboration with AWHRC for the World Court, *Testimony through Art* included 55 quilts and tapestries, paintings, photographs, drawings, poetry and narratives from 35 countries. While some of the works were individual, some were collective.

Each quilt, a silent testimony to women's creativity and courage, survival and strength.

Organised in the serene surroundings of the castle of Good Hope replete with history and memory, the exhibition attracted a large number of viewers and was covered extensively by the print and visual media. It travelled subsequently from Cape Town to Pretoria, Namibia and is now in Atlanta. We weave here in the following pages some of the stories of the quilts and the quilt makers; of the dreams and the dreamers







## Roland Freeman

*Conversations with a story teller*



*My earliest childhood memories are from the age of about three or four. In the Mid-Atlantic States in America, it is cold from October until the end of March. There was no central heating in homes. So people put on heavy bed coverings, and some of these bed coverings are decorative and they are known as Quilts. Some of them are not made as fancy as the others, but most families have Quilting traditions in them. Grandmothers make quilts for their children and grandchildren.*

*Such a Quilt was made for me and my brother and sister. The Quilt had no name. It was just this big quilt with big blotches on it, and this was what we slept under to stay warm. I remember my sister teasing me and telling me that the red blotch of material that was there on the quilt was blood and that it was going to get me at night. My mother quietened me down because I was hysterical about all this, and she said, "yes this quilt was made by your grandmother, Lina Freeman, and yes her spirit is in it and it is her spirit that will protect you throughout your life—you need not fear this."*

*Ever since then, whenever I see a quilt, I want to touch it. I want to feel the spirit that is in it.*

*I am sitting in front of a quilt that represents many political issues. It is a quilt that was put together by the Women of One World in Germany. But these squares that you see in the quilt are from many different countries that look at issues of violence against women and other political issues. This entire exhibit is made up of such quilts, tapestries, art, paintings and prints. They are truly Testimonies through Art. These are silent visual testimonies of hundreds of women from villages, hamlets, the back roads of the world you see.*

*They have carefully crafted their visual statements for presentation. Many of the works come out of women's collectives where they may not be extremely politically involved. However, I maintain that when these women join together to make something to economically empower themselves, they begin to network and therein they become politically astute.*

*What we have in this exhibition are works representing 35 different countries from around the world—from Bosnia, Europe, Africa, America, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, South East Asia, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, China, and Australia. Women have come from all four corners of the world to participate and testify in this Court. This work is the artistic silent testimony at the World Court of Women against War, for Peace, here in Cape Town. There are works and photographs here from the Arab Countries, the Palestinian movements, the Women In Black coming out of Iran, coming out of Jordan, coming out of Lebanon, coming out of Syria, coming out of Israel. We have works from Trinidad and Tobago, from young girls who in their lifetime would like to see peace and so have made a peace quilt to send here to this Court. Right here is a quilt that was made by the Zamaani Soweto sisters in Johannesburg.*





Women weave the fabric of world history



*We have work coming from the Balkans - Bosnia, Croatia and former Yugoslavia, work that was produced in refugee camps. We have work from places like Mali, Siberia, Tunis, Chad, Tanzania, and all these African countries. We have work from India, we have work from Sri Lanka and a lot of countries who are involved in civil war. Many of the works presented here are made by women who have been deeply affected by these wars and whose artistic expressions quite often were ways for them to deal with the trauma. It was therapy for them.*

*I hear people talking about domestic violence, and some women say, "well, most people know that we have been abused by men, but there are other issues." Like how do we keep our sanity for which sometimes we need more than just sisterhood. And so that person may be sitting and talking about this and that while doing some form of needlework, which keeps her occupied and helps her keep her sanity. I am looking at work from comfort women. In particular, the Filipina comfort women who traveled to this Court. I have a picture of them that has been drawn on a quilt, that's in the exhibition. I have diaries by women who were sexual slaves of the Japanese army. I have poems that were written. I also have pictures and poems written by women who are working in the Southeast, in the Pacific region, who are talking about the effects of US militarism on the whole area. What we tend to forget is that prostitution is generated when armies occupy places for long periods of time. What happens to those women who are no longer able to work in the area?*

*I had tapestries in the exhibit made by women in Chiapas, Mexico who are fighting with the Guerrillas. I went to Mexico to work with the women who live by making "miracle quilts". These are peasant women who live on the big ranches and who never talk to their husbands about problems but write them out instead. They draw pictures of them on little patches that are now in quilts.*

*One of the more interesting responses to the exhibition was from the Filipino comfort women. They saw this and they cried, they were so happy to be a part of this exhibit.*

*Several ladies who were from South Africa stood in front of this quilt made by the Zamani Souveto sisters and constantly tried to remember who everybody on the quilt was.*

*I saw one lady kneel down and say a prayer, and that was extraordinary for me. Then we have the quilts that came in from Women of One World in Germany, and the representatives they sent said that each time they see their quilts presented somewhere they are very happy. So it's that kind of thing that has made me feel like what I did was really worthwhile.*

**Extracted from an interview by Chalam Bennurakar - an independent film maker associated with the AWHRC, during the World Court of Women against War, for Peace**





*Threads of Our Culture: A Tapestry of Peace, 2000, 8'1/3" x 8'1/3". Designed, machine-pieced and quilted by 81 young ladies who are students at St. Joseph's Convent, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago*

## The Trinjan

*It is said that there was once a village, where as is customary in most villages in the Punjab, the men met together at the *chopal* at nightfall to relax and discuss the day's work. The women too had their *chopal*, the *trinjan* where they brought their unspun yarn to work and talk and spin the night away.*

We are told that gradually, and over a period of time, the sharing of knowledge and resources that took place at the *trinjan*, wrought a wonderful and visible change in these women. They became more sure of themselves, more self-reliant, more confident.

It would have seemed that it was now a time for rejoicing. But strangely enough, or perhaps it is not so strange, it was at this time that the tranquility of the village was disrupted. Rumours began. It was whispered that these women were dangerous – that they had gained secret knowledge; that they were familiar with the black arts and were a danger to society.

The whisperings soon became news and then the news became fact. From every corner of the market place fearful voices clamoured that religion was in danger! Society was in danger! Civilisation was in danger!

Then the village council met and the men agreed that the source of danger lay in the *trinjan* and in the women who possessed this knowledge. With this belief came the recognition that these women whom they feared, were no strangers. They were the mothers and the wives, the daughters and the sisters on whose love and service depended the security and comfort, not only of the present gathering but that of the future generations as well. And then the decision to act was taken.

That night, when the *trinjan* met and the merriment was at its height, shadowy figures crept out of the surrounding darkness and set the thatched *pindal* on fire. The *pindal* and its inmates were razed to the ground, and its ashes dispersed with the wind.

There is no record of this story in the best-known tales and epics of this area. It belongs to the female tradition and has been passed on from mother to daughter for generations. That mainstream tradition dismisses it as an old wives tale and gives it no credence is evidence of the oppression and exploitation of women in patriarchy and serves as a warning to women who come together to fight against their subjugation and oppression.

Simorgh Women's Collective.  
Lahore, Pakistan





## Stitched from the Soul

Gladys Marie Fry

Many of the various roles and contributions of slave women to plantation life have been swept under the rug of history. While slave men have long been acknowledged as skilled carpenters, brick masons, iron makers, furniture makers, wood carvers, and potters, women have been seen primarily in the role of plantation "mammy" figure. This limited view of slave women made them victims of three isms: racism, sexism and regionalism.



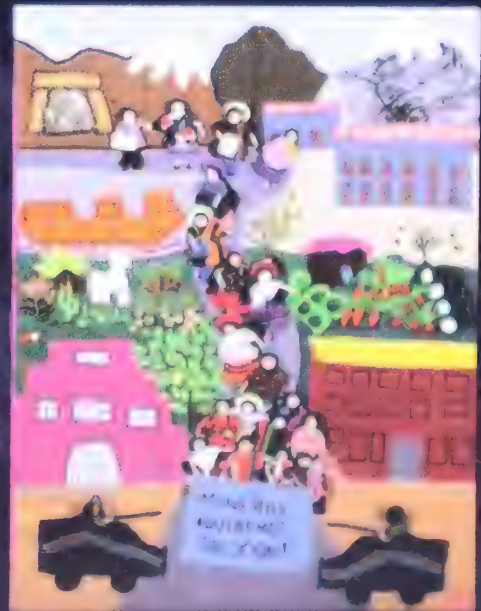
*Compadres (Rumba)*, 2000, 33 1/2" x 30"  
Hand-embroidered, appliqued and  
painted by Daller Pucé of Grupo Parche,  
La Havana, Cuba



Four members of the Daughters of Dorcas quilting *Mother Africa's Children*, an original design (and fabric selection) by Roland L. Freeman, Left to right: Gertrude Braan, Vivian Hoban, Joyce Nixon, and Viola Canady, Washington, DC, USA, November 1991.

In particular, the contribution of slave women to textile production and other crafty processes has been ignored. Yet the evidence that slave women produced fabric and that they quilted, sewed and crocheted is irrefutable. A significant number of slave made quilts are now preserved in fifteen states of England. As for other textiles, many woven coverlets, counterpanes, rag rugs, bed rugs and crocheted artefacts attributed to the handiwork of the slave women have been located.

Quilting also provided an outlet for slaves—a means of developing hidden talents and establishing a kind of emotional stability and independence. Quilting offered a time for introspection and reflection and a means of gaining perspective and control. Denied the opportunity to record their thoughts on paper, slaves unconsciously left careful records of their emotional and psychological well being on each surviving quilt. Clues are to be found for example, in the consistency of the stitching pattern: the relative length and evenness reflect a certain amount of inner harmony. Deviations from the pattern might well indicate that the quilt maker was nursing physical and emotional wounds. Colour preferences and abrupt changes might also serve as indicators of general well being.



*Pictorial Tapestry of Five Arab Women*, 2000,  
57 1/2" x 27 1/2" Hand-woven and  
dye-dyed by Bedouin women in Tunisia,  
North Africa





*A Bright Tomorrow*, 2000, 36" x 26 1/2". Painted by Kim Young-kyung of Durae-Bang (My Sister's Place), Seoul, South Korea.

*My mammy she work in de fiel' all day and piece quilt all night. Den she had to spin enough thread to make four cuts for de white fo'ks ebber night. Why sometime I nebber go to sleep. Hab to hold the light for her to see by. She hab to piece quilts for the white folks too. Why der is a scar on my arm where my bother let de r pine drip on me. Rich pine war all de light we ebber hab.*

Source: *Stitched from the Soul*

*Las Minerías (Wives of Mine Workers)*, 2000, 28 1/2" x 23". Hand-embroidered by Maria Helena Lopez and hand-sewn by Marina Haro Mesa, Toshiro Ayala and Benita Espinoza of Mujeres Creativas (Creative Women), Lima, Peru. "Mujeres queriendo Solución" means mine workers want to get a solution.



Additional physical clues might be stains of tears or blood. All of these clues help us trace the lifecycles of individual slave women, as well as chart their experiences and knowledge they gained along the way.

In a sense, the stitches, the tears, and the blood are *time markers* of the everyday event of their lives, marriage, birth of children, illnesses, separation of family members by sale or death, whippings, punishments, deprivation, and so forth.

Denied the opportunity to read or write, slave women quilted their diaries, creating permanent but unwritten records of events large and small, of pain and loss, of triumph and tragedy in their lives. And each piece of cloth became the focal point of their remembered past.

Jesse Jackson's fiery speech to the Democratic Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 19, 1998, referred to the quilting tradition in her family.

*When I was a child growing up in Greenville, South Carolina, and grand momma could not afford a blanket, she didn't complain, and we did not freeze. Instead she took old pieces of old cloth patches—wool, silk, gaberdine [sic], crockersack—only patches, barely good enough to wipe off your shoes with. But they didn't stay that way very long. With sturdy hands and a strong cord, she sewed them together into a quilt, a thing of beauty and power and culture.*

Source: Excerpts from Preface to *Stitched from the Soul*





## Kanthar Katha

In war and in peace, it is the woman who keeps the home fires burning even when there is no roof overhead and the fire is extinguished but not the spirit. Women are the makers of *kanthas* and so the *Kanthar Katha* continues into the new millennium.

*Kantha* is the traditional needlecraft in West Bengal and Bangladesh. It represented the tranquil, joyous self-expression of young girls, housewives and old women of every community whose watchwords were thrift, beauty and perfect craftsmanship. The collected papers of Gurusaday Dutt, a civil servant in pre-independent India with a dedicated passion for the folk arts and crafts of Bengal was published a decade ago and titled *Folk Arts and Crafts of Bengal*. Dutt writes, the term *kantha* signifies the poor man's blanket made out of old pieces of cloth patched and sewn into a single whole. The art of *Kantha* furnishes an illustration of the wonderful patience, craftsmanship and resourcefulness of the village women. Their chief motive is not the display but thrift and economy...and embroidering them purely for household use.



**Kanth.** 90"x85" Kantha work a vivid tapestry presenting vignettes depicting life in the rural Bengal in the late 19th and 20th century by Anju, Malati, Kushi and Krishna at the Crafts Council of West Bengal's Kamala Devi Kantha Centre, South Calcutta

The durability of *kantha* quilts handed down from one generation to another was because of the quality of embroidery consisting basically of *running stitches*. The *nakshas* or designs were a profusion of motifs that often turned into fantasy. The illuminated patterns included trees, flowers, bees, butterflies and birds, favourites being the peacock and the parrot. Human forms in various attires represented every aspect of rural life. The scenes often included an episode from the *Ramayana*, a scene from the current *jatra*, a steam engine, a *shikar* or hunting party - a common pastime of the *gonas* as the *sahibs* were called and pantalooned and red jacketed soldiers about whom the women heard stories from their men folk.

Popular religious emblems like *Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth, her auspicious footprint, the owl- her *vahana* or mount, the *shatadal padam* or hundred petalled lotus, conch shells, sheaves of rice and *kunkes* or rice measuring bowls depicting plenty, *sindur* or vermillion and *surmai* or eye liner containers and the mango shaped *kolka* known to the western world as the Paisley design were embroidered with love and respect. So were the sun, the source of energy, the *sunstika* and the *mandala*, the concentric circles with philosophical interpretations.

Each composition is unique and no two old *kanthas* look alike.

Onju, one of the oldest members of the group working at Crafts Council of West Bengal's (CCWB) Kamala Devi Kantha Centre in the south of Calcutta says that in her grandmother's time a woman's world was limited to her homestead and so they spent their precious leisure hours creating items of utility for the home and as gifts to loved ones out of well-worn saris and *dhotis* layered and skilfully strengthened with tiny running stitches. They stitched items nearest and dearest to a woman's heart - her daily household and *puja* (worship) items in empathy with the different aspects of nature around them, which they deftly recreated with needle and thread. Today Onju is able to supplement her family's income at the Centre by using the same craft. Looking up from the cushion cover she is working on, she says that the designs are different to what her grandmother used to do but she feels a sense of satisfaction and achievement.





Gradually with the import of machine made blankets, the concept of kanthas as quilts lost its importance. It continued to survive in the nurseries of rural Bengal. Sisters-in-law, mothers and grandmothers-in-law set to work on the soft cotton of a well-worn sari folded into squares to swaddle the newborn child. Nimble fingers stitch in runs of different lengths were sometimes autographed with a lullaby made up by the maker.

CCWB has been working towards the revival of this near obsolete handicraft by finding ways and means of adapting it to contemporary living so that it may once again be a living art instead of mere museum pieces and thereby help women to achieve a measure of economic independence. As a result of training centres in kantha embroidery set up by NGOs, its application has become a profession for many. Some work individually and some have in turn developed training-cum-production units run on a commercial basis with women and girls from the neighbourhood who either work at the centres or take the work home.

Some of the women from the Kamala Devi Kantha Centre who had contributed their stories to the first anthology published by the Asian Women Human Rights Council for the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995 came over to the CCWB office to talk about the second volume. Looking at their photograph working on the *sujni* kantha which was then in the initial stages with only the central hundred petalled lotus completed when the first volume was published. They are thrilled that the finished Kantha would be a part of an exhibition of Quilts and Tapestries on the occasion of the World Court of Women Against War, for Peace in South Africa in 2001. As they chat over a bowl of *rosogollas*, each of the group has something to say. Bobby and Onju feel that though they would like to depict topical events they are busy from morning to night and have little leisure time. If Shyamoli ever has the chance she would like to depict the scene at the *Kargil* conflict front and Bobby adds that she would like to include herself assisting the wounded. Krishna said that her maternal grandmother told her that she seldom went out and there was no TV *so our recreation was to create our own little world on our kanthas and be happy*. Krishna would like to embroider a scene depicting the homes of the men who went to fight in *Kargil* and sometimes did not return. Beauty and Onju agree with her.

Some of the women in the group say that they do make TV and telephone covers and prefer cheerful motifs like a vase of flowers, birds flying or farmers harvesting the paddy, but they often have to buy ready-mades. Bobby shakes her head, *Not me. After working in the Centre, I have imbibed a different aesthetic sense. I hope one day I will be able to embroider a kantha like Manada Sundari's. We have copied her kantha, which will be exhibited abroad soon, and people will come to know how life was in her time. I would like to depict topical scenes and subjects so that future generations may also know how life was in my time.* Pritikona embroiders tablecloths in her spare time and would like to make a kantha showing all the Hindu wedding symbols with a lotus in the centre.

The choice of subject is not always the makers anymore. Kanthas are now made mainly to generate income to be sold so the market dictates the designs. Pritikona summed up what the rest of the group felt – *Our daily life is a struggle for survival - every step we take is on a war footing almost. To get to work, we have to fight our way through the traffic on the roads, the crowds of people on buses and on trains. When we reach the Centre we feel we have arrived at a haven of peace. The environment is pleasant and the work we do is beautiful. We forget our problems for a few hours. What is more, we are now self-reliant and confident.*

Jaya Chaliha, India

[ The Kanthar Katha was displayed in the Testimony Through Art ]







## My design



*A SUFI of the Order of the Naqshbandis was asked:*

*"Your Order's name means, literally, "The Designers".*

*What do you design, and what use is it."*

*He said:*

*"We do a great deal of designing, and it is most useful. Here is a parable of one such form"*

*Unjustly imprisoned, a tinsmith was allowed to receive a rug woven by his wife. He prostrated himself upon the rug day after day to say his prayers, and after some time he said to his jailers:*

*"I am poor and without hope, and you are wretchedly paid. But I am a tinsmith. Bring me tin and tools and I shall make small artefacts, which you can sell in the market, and we will both benefit.*

*The guards agreed to this, and presently the tinsmith and they were both making a profit, from which they bought food and comforts for themselves.*

*Then one day when the guards went to the cell, the door was open and he was gone.*

*Many years later when this man's innocence had been established, the man who had imprisoned him asked him how he had escaped, what magic he had used. He said:*

*"It is a matter of design, and design within design. My wife is a weaver. She found the man who had made the locks of the cell door, and got the design from him. This she wove into the carpet, at the spot where my head touched in prayer five times a day. I am a metal worker, and this design looked to me like the inside of a lock. I designed the plan of the artefacts to obtain the materials to make the key and I escaped."*

*"That," said the Naqshbandi Sufi, "is one of the ways in which man makes his escape from the tyranny of his captivity."*

**Source: Star Quilt, Streelekha and Asian Women's Human Rights Council**

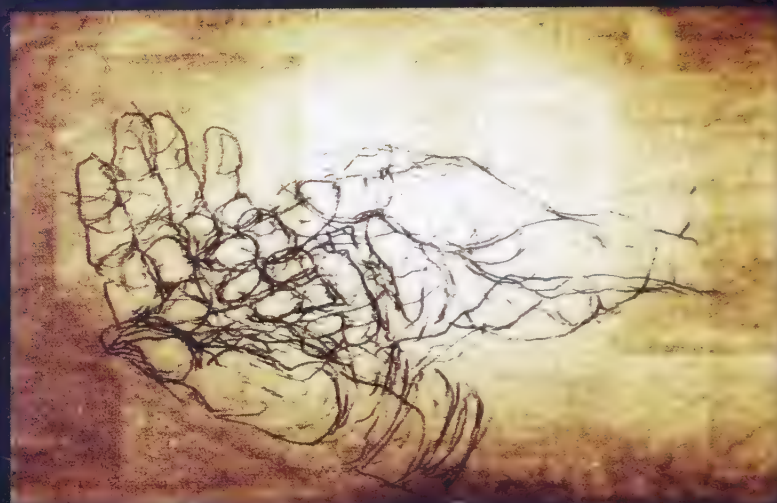




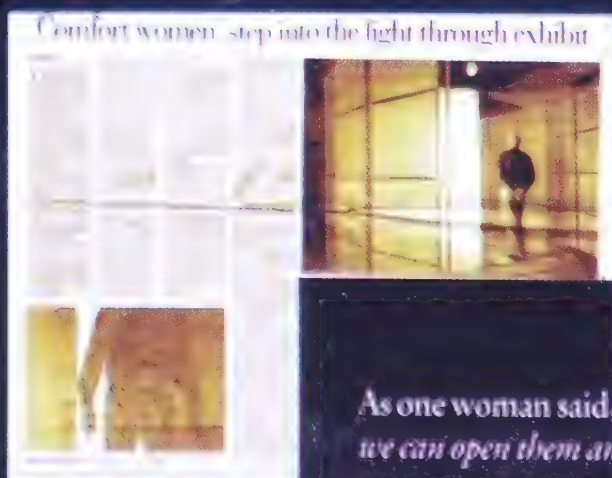
**For 50 years we've had our hands closed;  
now we can open them and tell our story to the  
world**

### *Lines of Violation*

An art installation created by British artist Andrew Ward and co-coordinated and conceptualised by American human rights activist, Jonathan Sisson, it illustrated in a unique way the deeper issues involved in the struggle for redress of the Filipino, Korean and Taiwanese women who were victimised as sex slaves by the Japanese military during World War II. The installation comprises of a curved Perspex wall carrying large panels of the drawing of the hands of the comfort women on both sides, lit by a central column of light. The images are seen against the background of the women's voices telling their stories.



As many media critics pointed out, the curved shape of the wall, together with the pillar of light, had symbolic significance. Together it represented the *yoni* and *lingam*, the ancient Indian notion of the female and male principles. The symbolism is therefore deeper. The column that represents the male principle also serves as the source of illumination that lights up the drawings and exposes the atrocities that a militaristic, phallocratic culture visits upon women.



A very personal and creative response of the artist who has captured evocatively the suffering and strength etched into the lines on the individual hands of the *lolas* as he held them, was transformed into a public condemnation of the lines of genocidal violation a military culture can create.

As one woman said, *"For 50 years we've had our hands closed; now we can open them and tell our story to the world."*

The installation was created out of extensive interactions between Andrew Ward and the scores of comfort women survivors from the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan and AWHRC-Philippines who have been part of the campaign for justice and reparation for the comfort women.





## Andrew Ward

*Lines of violation, lines of love, lines of hate, lines of healing*

*Each one of these lines is an immediate transference of my hand touching theirs, on to the drawing. Each of the women presented their hands in their own way. For instance this woman here, she came and said, "I am going to keep one hand closed because for 50 years I have been silent, have not told my story but now I tell my story."*



*It's incredible that the depths of the lines in the hand are almost like lines that go across the earth. This whole story of comfort women was the first time that I personally got in touch with the rape of the feminine, which I think now goes into a much broader area, an area where it is like the microcosm and the macrocosm. This whole installation is an attempt to let the stories be told without much of my own personal interpretation; I do this by using the hands, which act as a very intimate, yet neutral area in which the stories can unfold.*

*I built the installation on the basic holy form of the yoni and the lingam, the Indian symbols of the male and the female. This healing process is in an attempt to bridge the gender gap and to bring this healing back where the male and the female are in balance again. This whole theme has to be about healing and has to be a point of learning for the future generations. So we know that we can stand in good relation and balance with each other! And that's the sense I tried to achieve by letting people actually walk inside. The recorded voices of the women that you hear inside are played simultaneously; they are in Korean, Chinese, Filipino, Taiwanese, and in about eight different indigenous languages. This is to add another level, a hearing level in order to activate as many senses as possible and to convey the story on multiple levels. If you cannot understand the stories, you will never be able to relive what these women have lived through. It is important to get that sense and depth of the story.*

*The only way that we will ever change anything is by remembering, by telling the stories and changing what we must radically change.*

*This piece created by me as an artist is part of my personal story. It has to be part of my personal story because I feel that unless you make it truly personal there will be no expression. I cannot tell the stories of these women, but I can in a sense embody it from my side.*



Extracts from an interview by Chalam Bannurakar, an independent documentary filmmaker associated with AWHRC.





## Women in Black

A worldwide movement of women against violence and war, for peace, a Women in Black action was organised at the City Civic Centre in Cape Town on March 7, 2001. Usually a silent and still action by women dressed all in black, the spirit of the women of South Africa brought its own *song and movement* to the protest. Almost 3,000 women, largely from South Africa but also from the countries who participated in the World Court, sang and danced along the Hertzog Boulevard in their own unique form of protest against the wars of this century. Many others stood and sat silently holding placards that expressed their dissent and their dream.



*Poverty is violence; Women are human beings not sexual objects; Stop Israeli occupation of Palestine; US: the biggest war criminal of this century; No to nuclear violence; Our souls refuse to be caged by fundamentalist violence; We want peace in our homes and in our world; Our struggle for peace is a struggle of memory against forgetting; We want lines of peace, not lines that divide; Military sexual slavery—a war crime; We protest war and weapons culture...* were some of the silent cries of the women.

The Women in Black movement began in Tel-Aviv in Haifa, in Jerusalem... Palestinian and Israeli women together speaking of a homeland for the Palestinians. It has grown differently in different countries and in different contexts. Women in Black demonstrating on the streets of Belgrade every Wednesday from the beginning of the war in 1991; women speaking for women of all nationalities who are victims of rape and torture of the wars; women demanding that rape be treated as a war crime; Women in India protesting against communal violence, refusing to let the politics of hate and intolerance destroy the humanity that binds and lives within all faiths; Lolas, grandmothers, comfort women survivors standing together dressed in black, in the Philippines, protesting the violence done to them 50 years ago and asking for justice and compensation... Over 3,000 women coming together to protest the growing violence in women's lives at the NGO Forum of the IV World Women's Conference...

The Women in Black Movement redefined and recreated itself in South Africa, even while reaffirming its original faith in peace, rejecting all forms of war and violence.





## The Caravans of Women

The Caravans of Women that were initiated by women's organisations in different countries and regions, cities and communities as part of the preparatory processes towards the World Court of Women against War, for Peace continue even after the Court.

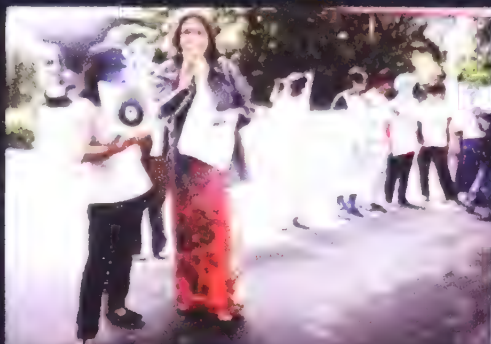
The attempt was not only to take the issues of the Court out into the different regions but to connect to local issues while giving deeper relevance to the perspective of the Court.

The Caravans were a *soul journey* of songs, street theatre, poetry, dance and storytelling. Even smaller Courts were held along the journey.

### South Africa

Caravans and public meetings focusing on *poverty, gender violence, child abuse and HIV/AIDS* were held throughout the Western and Eastern Cape in South Africa connecting it to the World Court. At each caravan videos were shown of the Africa Court of Women and pamphlets were widely distributed. The *Refugee Caravan* commenced on October 16, 2000 in the Western Cape—poetry, performances and music marked the caravan, which was documented through video and audio footage. The purpose of the caravan was also to reach out to refugee women, listen to the stories and facilitate the organising of their own organisation.

### The Philippines



The *women's caravan for peace on the ex-comfort women* was launched on November 20, 2000 in Manila to draw attention to the urgent and continuing cry of the Filipino comfort women and other victims of wartime sexual slavery from the Japanese Imperial Army, for justice in their lifetime and state legal compensation from the Japanese government, which is still an unfulfilled responsibility.

The caravans highlighted the role of the ex-comfort women as peacemakers who stood at the forefront of a national and international movement for peace and compensation. As one Lola survivor said, *"I thought that since I was the victim of rape and sex slavery, I should be ashamed and should be silent. Today, I feel much different, a new person. I now know that those who should feel shame are the perpetrators of rape and violence—the soldiers of the Japanese army and their government who does not face up to their legal responsibility."*

The Lolas ex-comfort women survivors shared with the caravan participants their vision for peace: that women should never lose their self-esteem. That a new consciousness of valuing oneself is the basis of their empowerment.





The second phase of the women's peace caravan was held from December 18-28, 2000 and addressed the *Mindanao armed conflict situation*, specifically the attitude and practices reflecting social exclusion of Muslim people and communities and of other tribal, Lumad indigenous people in the Mindanao Island.

The caravan methodology included dialogues and consultations. Reports of sexual abuse on Muslim women perpetrated by government soldiers surfaced during interviews with Muslim women in Marawi City. In the course of the discussion on what to do regarding the matter, a recommendation to organise a documentation training among barangays and community women leaders in critical conflict areas was suggested so that victims could have recourse for cases of human rights violations and particularly on incidents of women sexual abuse by government soldiers.

Preparatory meetings for future caravans in February and March were held in Davao City. On January 9 and 10, 2001 a visit to the caravan in Zamboanga City was done that resulted in a recommendation for follow-up: the holding of an arts and culture women's festival for peace in Mindanao in 2002 to highlight the ethnic arts, dances, history of the tribes, and the roles of Lumad and Muslim women who come from the different tribes that have embraced the Muslim faith.

### India



Following a national level workshop on the World Court of Women against War, for Peace organised by AWHRC along with Women's Voice and Vimochana, several groups initiated caravans of women, public rallies and meetings in different states. These included a massive public procession of about 4,000 women and men on the rights of the Dalit women in Tumkur district, Karnataka on February 16, 2001.

Women's *jathas* or caravans were held between March 25 and 29, 2001 through three districts of Kerala, focusing on issues related to globalisation, the dominant model of development, sex tourism and increasing violence against women.

Women in Black actions organised by Vimochana in the city of Bangalore focusing on the issues raised by the Court, included a public meeting on February 12 with Teesta Setelvaad, a journalist-activist who spoke of the effects of communal politics on women in India.





*And now  
we walk without the tribe  
except the ones  
who tread the spaces in between  
the past and the future  
with us*

## The Round Tables

*March 6 - 7 2001*

*An* Opening Panel of speakers put forwarded the *Challenges of Our Times* as questions for the Roundtables on March 6 while a Closing Panel on March 7, speaking *Towards a New Political Imagination*, captured the essence of the *new thinking* that emerged through the two days of discussions. The speakers on the opening panel included Samira Khoury, Jordan; Zarana Papic, Yugoslavia; Nelia Sancho, Philippines; Mililani Trask, Hawaii; Fatima Meer and Mavivivi Manyakanyaka Manzini, South Africa. The speakers on the closing panel included Vjosa Dobruna, Kosovo; Vicky Corpuz, Philippines; Preggs Govender, South Africa; Cheri Honkala and Cora Weiss, USA.

The Roundtables followed two basic themes:

- I. Towards understanding the context and the roots of war and conflict*
- II. Towards alternative notions of justice, evolving new visions of peace*

The following section includes some of the panel presentations and highlights of the Roundtable discussions.

## Theme I

### Towards understanding the context and the roots of war and conflict

The roundtables included in this theme were organised to understand the changing faces of war in our times, to seek the roots of wars this century, to focus on the specific forms of violence against women in this context.

- \* Globalisation of Poverty: *The War against Subsistence*
- \* Nation State, Nationalism and Fundamentalisms:  
*The War of Borders and Boundaries*
- \* Militarisation: *The War Against Human Security*
- \* Racism: *The War of Social Exclusion*
- \* Indigenous: *The War against Forgotten Wisdoms*
- \* Trafficking: *The War against Women*
- \* Refugees: *The War Against the Other*

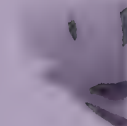
## Theme II

### Towards alternative notions of justice, evolving new visions of peace

The Roundtables in this session looked at the institutions and notions of justice and peace that have evolved to respond to the wars of our times. Is it possible for a universalised jurisprudence to be able to weave together peace with justice, justice with healing and healing with transformation or do we look for the many roads to peace?

- \* Truth and Reconciliation Commission: *Justice without revenge*
- \* War Crimes Tribunals
- \* Women and Social Movements: *Weaving Peace with Justice*
- \* Reconciling Memories of War
- \* Healing and Peace Building in Local Communities
- \* Poverty and Social Spending - South Africa
- \* Violence Against Women - South Africa





## Challenges to Our Times: Opening Panel

### Capitalism is without any moral values

*Fatima Meer, South Africa*

Our greatest problem today is the economic system that dominates the world - capitalism. It is the root cause of world poverty, of the division between the First World and the Third, between north and south, between the rich and the poor, between black and white, since the black and brown peoples of the world continue to suffer the legacy of colonialism, now aggravated through the process of globalisation.

Capitalism is without any moral values since it is structured on the false Smithsonian precept that each individual pursuing his self-centered, selfish interests, results in the collective wealth of the nation. Capitalism accumulates wealth for the capitalist; it totally disregards the moral imperative to share that wealth. In that context, it is anti-religion, since the religions of the world see wealth as a trust given by God to be shared and equitably distributed.

Under colonialism, the colonies became the producers of raw materials, the colonising countries, the processors of that material, the industrialists, who transferred the wealth of the colonies to the mother countries and processed it into manufactured goods and then retransferred it to the colonies at exorbitant prices. The order of the world economy remains unchanged under globalisation.

*The First World continues to be industrialised and capitalised while the Third World continues to be underdeveloped and impoverished.*

The most exploited and impoverished sector of humanity are the women of the world. They have to unite and fight a system which creates and sustains poverty and which is responsible for all the divisions and the wars in our human society.

## To the Return of the Feminine Paradigm

Mililani Trask, Hawaii

War and violence are as old as mankind itself. In colonial times, war was viewed as the province of kings seeking to expand their empires and protect the borders of the lands they claimed as kingdoms. War was a manifestation of the process of imperial rulers. From its inception, modern views of war have always accepted that warfare is a masculine undertaking, necessary for the maintenance and preservation of the nation state, and thus the preservation of civilisation. In modern times we are told that we must accept the *necessary evil of war*.

The great challenge at the new millennium is to change the old paradigms of power and violence that shape our lives through government and private sector (economic) policy. The old paradigm and the legacy of imperialism and colonisation, arose historically with the pronouncements of the Vatican, known as the *Papal Bulls*. These decrees authorise and sanction the subjugation of the people's culture of the non-European world and the theft of their lands and natural resources. From the unholy union of imperialism and colonisation were born racism, sexism, slavery and militarism. These evils spawned poverty, apartheid, ignorance and ethnocide.

Colonisation and Imperialisation also commercialised and commodified women. European concepts of class and its racial distinctions were transmitted globally through the process of colonisation and race, ethnicity, wealth, power and religion became qualities that separated women, one from another and from their cultures and traditions.

We see the impact of colonisation today. In the West, goods are sold through media portrayals of sexy women. In the South, the commodification of women has taken more sinister forms including trafficking of women for labour and sexual exploitation and the subjugation of 'comfort women' by armed forces engaged in overt acts of violence.

The legacies that we inherit from the old paradigm are many.

1. The evolution of global and national policies that justify the economic exploitation of lands and indigenous peoples of the world to benefit the developed consuming nations of the North—the process of globalisation.
2. The expansion of militarism throughout the world, because militarism is needed to enforce racist economic policies and to maintain neo-colonial governments.
3. The wholesale exploitation of the world's natural resources and the extensive degradation of the environment, including toxicity, pollution, nuclear contamination, and ozone depletion, which result in starvation and malnutrition.
4. And most significantly, the devaluation of human life, significant and expanding violations of human rights, genocide and ethnocide.



The tragic corollary to these losses has been the loss of the knowledge and practices of women and the near eradication of peace, which has always been in the keeping of women.

This is the old paradigm we must abandon, reject and expose. Throughout the world we see much evidence of violence against women, their cultures, and communities in many forms. States and transnational corporations try to disguise violence against women by characterising the various forms of violence in the sanitised language of *structural and social adjustment* and *economic boycott or benefit*. These government and societal practices seek to personalise and privatise issues of systemic violence; institutionalise racism and sexism and relegate political injustice and human rights violation to the realm of the *domestic*. The colonial perspective has always viewed domestic violence as acceptable and has cloaked it in a veil of silence.

Women's rights cannot be privatised, individualised or domesticated by Government policies either under national or international law. This is our greatest challenge – to replace the old paradigm of power and violence – not with a new paradigm – but with the first paradigm, the *feminine paradigm*. Women are the mothers of nations. We are the mothers of cultures and of the children who have been the slaughtered sacrifices laid on the altar of war. *It is time to reclaim our innate knowledges* – the knowledge of birth, the knowledge of nurturing life and the knowledge of love.

Returning to the matrilineal indigenous worldview, recalling the original instructions of the Creator to our peoples – to act as guardians of the sacred earth and all earth's children and to maintain and sustain society; a method of world development that awakens the diversity of life, the culture of our peoples and our mother - the earth.

*The culture of violence is maintained by the culture of silence* – silence imposed by militarism and maintained by poverty, illness, homelessness, desperation and fear.

We have come to South Africa to convene the World Court of Women – to reject the silence imposed by the old paradigm – to name the perpetrators of war and violence, and to expose the inhumanity of globalisation and violence. Our goal is a simple one – to return to the path of our grandmothers; to walk in the visions of our cultures; to utilise environmentally responsible technology for the benefit of all life forms; to maintain the diverse cultures of the world; and to achieve this goal through the practice of peace.

We have come to South Africa – to build a new era of justice, in solidarity with the women of this land. Together we commit ourselves to the return of the feminine paradigm – as mothers of nations, as mothers of cultures, families and children. *In this way will we greet the new millennium.*

## Globalisation of Poverty: The War against Subsistence

*Rapporteur*

*Biljana Kasic, Croatia*

Poverty is a critical area of concern that is linked across the boundaries of equality, development and peace.

At our roundtable we spoke about the impact of globalisation on women's lives and women's worlds as well as people within local communities through the exploitation of domestic labour, the imposition of certain types of industry and fabricated needs, the expelling of women from workplaces, unfair competition and misuse of human and natural resources, causing lack of security, difficult life and starvation to people and women in particular, especially those who are at high risk (rural, indigenous, disabled, refugee and displaced women) and those who face particular barriers because of their race, language, ethnicity etc.

We tried to share our personal experiences but instead we shared our dilemmas and thoughts about the very concepts of *globalisation* and *poverty*. How to define poverty and globalisation, how are they related to each other, whether poverty is something quite measurable or quantified or a social construct whose definitions rely on concrete countries and situations, or whether it is a question of natural and human relations. We also discussed to what extent globalisation has colonised us or whether globalisation means a new type of re-arrangement between rich and poor countries, between North and South, West and East, etc.

The paradigm of fast economic growth from the Western perspective has failed to decrease poverty. Despite the conventional wisdom that the issue of poverty is on the minds of world leaders, we are aware that we have to speak again and again about the great controversies around the utilisation of human and natural resources, inadequate capital accumulation and the absurd ideology of global *development*, sociocultural isolation of some regions and countries, restraints on the open market, feminisation of poverty and the serious disadvantage of traditional cultures in the market competition.





*Testimony on the Globalisation of Poverty*  
Wangaari Mathai, Kenya

We should acknowledge not only the variety of poverties we have faced throughout the world but a variety of approaches to the *very meaning of poverty* (cultural, economic, political, social). At the same time we should be aware of the obstacles, gaps and traps of on-going *globalisation*; the patterns that provide agonies and discrepancies between the privileged and underprivileged, the rich and poor, those who have the power to address issues or to measure poverty and our lives, those who lead the world economy and technological *inventions* and those who have no power to have a voice or make influence or who themselves are objects or victims of increasing so-called development and so-called progress. One participant said: *Globalisation took power away from us.*

*How to shift the patterns, to turn the point, to create alternatives?*

In order to create solutions or alternatives we need to transform the conventional discourses we are getting used to as well as learn how to pose the right questions, the questions that touch our needs, the needs from our own communities. Therefore, we need to challenge political structures on all levels, we have to find ways to resist or stop *globalisational development* by creating women's networking and support around certain issues among others.

But, primarily, we have to look at local solutions, to restore our own values, to listen to our own capabilities, creative sources, to explore our own needs and own strengths towards the quality of life that refers to our visionary scope, to build self-sustainable cycles.

*I emphasised in the course of this Court and in the course of our listening to each other and since we are in Africa, that it is very important for us, not only to be concerned about our pain about the victim and about the perpetrators of the violence, because all of that, to me, are symptoms.*

*It is very important for us to go beyond the symptoms and look for the cause of the anger and frustration we find in our men. For they transfer the anger and frustration against us.*

*A lot of the testimonies today, at least those that I heard, are the results of conflict, internal conflict. So, why is it that our men are turning to wars? Why are they fighting?*

*We ought to understand that some of the forces that are shaping Africa are not really of our own making.*

*In Kenya, every individual, man, child and woman owes the rich countries of the world about 22,000 shillings. Most of them will not be able to pay that money in their lifetime, because it is increasing everyday. And so, for most of us we are already mortgaged. Even among the children who are yet to be born. That is Kenya. And I can tell that Kenya is not considered as one of the poorest countries in the world.*

*We are not at the rock bottom; most African countries are in the bucket, where they are indebted to the tune of second and third generations.*

*So, we are already economic slaves of the rich countries of the world and most of us don't know.*

*This can make a government extremely dictatorial and very insensitive to the basic needs of the people because, if they have to pay these debts to the rich countries, they will definitely not have money to give education to our children.*

*They will not have the money to give medicine in the hospitals. So, when we get sick, we go to the hospital and if we are poor, we will be left alone. They will not have money to repair the road. So, there will be more roads like the Kenyan roads.*

*Now these are global forces, but it is very easy for us women in Africa to look at the men violating us and not realise there are other forces out there. That is why we are talking about globalisation; the globalisation of poverty.*

*Globalisation of poverty has already happened. In many African countries it is not just the women who are poor it is also the men. Which is sometimes the reason why I don't talk about feminisation of poverty, but instead almost talk about blackenisation or Africanisation of poverty, because there are very few rich people on this continent.*

*I would like to talk a bit about feminisation of poverty, from the issue of what happened to our cash crops.*

*Most of us did not decide what we should do with our economy. We are divided by people we believe to be experts, mostly who were governing us before the colonial powers.*

*They advised us what to plant. So we grew tea, coffee, cotton and pineapples. Some other people were advised to grow coco. Others were advised to grow cotton; others were advised to keep selling their copper as in Zimbabwe. We were not given the powers to decide what kind of economic policy we wanted to follow.*

*So, when we were advised to grow these cash crops, we remained as we were during the colonial times, providers of the raw materials, and as providers we did not belong to the international bodies such as the World Trade Organisation, which decides on prices of these commodities. Therefore, if today we produce coffee, and Brazil and Rwanda is producing coffee and the WTO decides that this time there is too much of coffee, we will pay the price that they dictate.*

*And that is what goes. Our government has no say; we as women have no say. We, as women, who are growing coffee in the rural areas are at the rural edge of the economic system because we don't decide the price of what we buy and we don't decide the price of what we sell.*



*And that is a very unjust economic system. And, as long as we are living in that economic system, we shall never be able to remove our poverty. It is made worse by the fact that we have leadership, that has failed to be responsible and to be accountable to its people.*

*The ruling elite that took power from their colonial masters has been very irresponsible to the African people. It has turned itself into a dictatorship. It has been very oppressive. It has made Africans extremely poor and it has made them a laughingstock. And therefore, when today we want to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we find ourselves, incapable of doing it because we are so poor and our leaders so irresponsible that when they get into power, they start saying, you would be alright, you would not be so poor, if it was not for members of this ethnic community and then we preach that ethnic hatred.*

*And, our leaders take the money we have gained. They will go and buy guns from the same people who are buying our coffee at the price they decide and sell us cars at the price they decide. They will go and buy guns, and we come and spend the rest of our time killing each other on this continent.*

*And, most of the evidences we were listening to this morning arise as a result of this conflict. What can we, as women of Africa, do to remove ourselves from this vicious circle. We have ended up doing nothing for the last 30 years, except fight amongst ourselves and produce more refugees than any other part of the world.*

*We as women of Africa cannot afford to say we are violated by our men and therefore our men are evil. We need to go beyond that. We need to understand the forces that are pressurising our men, so that we see what we can do in order to change that anger and frustration that is in them, to direct the positive and to see how we can work together as Africans on this continent. Because I can tell you for sure that somebody, somewhere is quite happy that we cannot manage our lives since we are so busy killing each other and causing conflict and violating our women and children.*

*Therefore, as African women, let us not just look for the victim, let us not just look for the perpetrators. Let us look for the root cause of the problem in this region, which has caused so much misery, not only to women and children but also to many of our men.*

*Then I think we shall be able to get ourselves out of this mess. But to do so, my sisters, we really have to stop fearing politics and economics, because whether you like it or not, decisions are being made at the political and economic level that will make the difference and decide whether we continue holding such a course or we begin to deal with the new issues that are shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*Thank you very much.*

*Testimony presented by Wangaari Mathai during the Mahakama Ya Mama Wa Afrika, Africa Court of Women, organised by El Taller International and El Taller Africa in collaboration with several other international and regional groups, Nairobi, Kenya in June 1999.*

## Nation-States and Nationalisms: The War of Borders and Boundaries

*Rapporteur*

*Zarana Papic, Yugoslavia*

In this roundtable that was organised as a brainstorming workshop, all the participants were asked to define their notion of nationalism and fundamentalism, since there are varying histories of nationalisms and also since today nationalisms are different in different contexts. For some participants nation-states, nation building and nationalisms constitute three different phenomena, while for some others nationalism is a constitutive part of the nation-state concept and of the nation building process.

This was revealed even more starkly through the varied thoughts expressed by the participants - each of whom came from different contexts - from Yugoslavia, Indonesia, South Africa, India, Israel and Sierra Leone. Each experience added to our nuanced understanding of the reconstitution of identities in the era of the nation state and globalisation and the *appropriation of the female and the feminine* in the project of nation building and competing nationalisms.

We discussed the potential danger of Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia destroying the fragile social tissue. We also named the Serbian nationalism as the one most *responsible* for the wars in former Yugoslavia, being too the biggest and most dominant nation in the former federative state structure. We talked about the growth of the *Hindu Nation* in India - that is seemingly a reaction to European ideologies of nationalism but in fact retains its core concepts of governance, science and rationality that are now sought to be realised through a language that is *Hindu* in its new defined sense; a nationalism that seeks to glorify retrogressive ideas of a subservient Hindu woman even while not compromising on the need for her to become a *consummate consumer* and *militant citizen*.

## *Fusion of Nation and State*

*What we have learnt to call the state today is actually the modern nation-state. It entered the world scene only after the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. Though a contractual element had already entered the civic space by the 13th century in parts of Europe, the treaty gave formal institutional status to the emerging concept of the state in Europe. But even then the concept would have never attained the power it later did if the French Revolution had not underwritten it by linking up the story of the state to that of nationalism.*

*With the spread of republicanism in Europe, severe doubts grew among European elites about the long-term legitimacy of the merging non-monarchical states. Nationalism came in, and was systematically promoted, as an alternative basis of such legitimacy. The Weberian charisma that was previously concentrated in the person of the monarch - supposedly mediating between the sacred and the secular orders - was now distributed among the population, and a non-specific nationalism was seen as the best guarantor of the stability of the state.*



*This sense of insecurity, of which nationalism was supposed to be the cure, persisted in the culture of the nation-state. From the very beginning, nation-building - a polite term for the cultural and ideological homogenisation of a country's population - became one of the goals, stated or unstated, of the modern state. Some early nation-states, for instance, even proscribed trade unions. And, of course, there was always some godforsaken minority or other that these states could exclude. Such minorities had places only in the few remaining fragmented nations where the construction of the past was itself plural and could not easily be built on a romanticised imperial memory.*

*The concept of the state that emerged from this experience had some distinguishing features. Among other things, the new concept assumed a closer fit between the realities of ethnicity, nation and state; it gave a more central role to the state in the society than the ancient regime had done; and it redefined the state as the harbinger and main instrument of social change, which in the European context meant being the trigger for and protector of the modern institutions associated with industrial capitalism. These newly assumed functions naturally made the modern nation-state suspicious of all cultural differences, not on grounds of racial or ethnic prejudice, but on the ground that such differences intervened between the liberated individual and the republican state and interfered with the more professional aspects of statecraft.*

*Even more important, thanks to the new institutional ordering that went with the new concept of the state and the expansion of the colonial empires (which had already begun to become globally visible), within a short time the concept of nation-state not only marginalised all other concepts of the state in Europe but also began to enter the interstices of public consciousness all over Asia, South America and Africa.*

Extracts: "Fusion of Nation State" by Ashis Nandy, *The Development Dictionary*, Ed. Wolfgang Sachs.

As nationalism is a hidden form of ideology, there was the need felt for a *counter-ideology* that will be able to confront new faces of nationalism today. There is a paradox of *competing nationalisms* through *permanent conflict*, as in the case of Israeli and Palestinian nationalism. Nationalism, as ideology, is playing games with people's emotions and with their basic belongings in order to justify political conflict among elites. We also discussed the growing process of globalisation that has resulted in a growing counter-process of regionalisation and the rise of nationalism, which contradictorily enough seems to cater to the needs of the hegemonic global economic order, for instance the movement for self-determination in East Timor.

Participants took part in a lively discussion, and at the end, each one defined with one word what should be done to confront nationalisms. Here are just a few of those words: respect, dialogue, counter-ideology, social movements, consciousness raising, individualisation process, etc.

## Gender and Nationalism

Gender relations have often been a crucial focus of nationalist movements; this is also the case for revivalist, religious fundamentalist and ethnically based movements. Nationalist ideas often draw heavily on notions of the nation as a family, and invoke an ancestral past. These ideas invoke powerful constructions of women's place and their nature, as well as constructions of gender relations, which are believed to be traditional (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1984). It is a common finding of analyses of nationalism that, once movements come to power, gender issues become seen as secondary.

Women are implicated in nationalism in a number of ways: as biological reproducers; as reproducers of boundaries of national groups (for example, through marriage restrictions); as transmitting national cultures; and as active participants in national struggles. Additionally, women are symbolic figurations of the nation and embodiments of male honour (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Yuval-Davis 1997). They both represent cultural and psychic boundaries and help to inscribe them through ritual and cultural practices (Brah 1993, 1(97)).

Some women, then, participate in nationalist movements as part of a gendered mobilisation (see Molyneux 1998); others become mobilised through participation. Still others support nationalist movements as part of a wider social movement. Whatever women's actual reason for participation, they often hold a particular place in nationalist thought, as *bearers of the collective* (Yuval-Davis 1980). The Janus-faced nature of nationalism is commonly resolved through gendered symbolism. In a common process of splitting, men are often seen to represent forward-looking progressive aspects of nationalism while women, represented as bearers of national tradition, implicitly carry its backward-looking aspects (McClintock 1993).

### Links between Globalisation, Ethno-nationalism and Gender

The recent period has seen the proliferation of movements often termed *ethno-nationalist*. Why should globalising processes have spawned such movements? Globalisation has been associated with the increase of multiple or *hybrid* identities. As Hall notes, the *other* has been imported into all societies through migration, tourism and the impact of the media, making the sense of strangeness difficult to maintain (Hall 1992). Globalisation may increase awareness of social *difference*, even creating a longing for it (Kahn 1995). Thus, globalisation may directly undermine a search for boundedness; however, it may at the same time stimulate a desire for boundaries.

The increasing impact of global culture, especially the arrival of television, and the widespread belief that globalisation brings homogeneity (i.e., Americanisation) all stimulate attempts to define local cultures (Anderson 1995: 95). Thus, a common analysis is that, in circumstances of globalisation, people may seek security in known group identities, or those constructed as *traditional* - for example ethnicity, nation, religion. Ethno-nationalisms tend to share the characteristic of wishing to return to a more bounded world, one in which meaning is attached to local practices and representations.



It is important not to conflate the *local* with ethno-nationalisms. Islamic movements, for instance, are not ethnically based although they may wish to counter globalisation; Scottish nationalism is, at least at present, an example of civic nationalism (that is, nationalism based on residence). Nor do ethno-nationalisms have only, or even predominantly, social-psychological motivation. Many of the internal or civil wars that have proliferated have some basis in economic and social inequalities, sometimes of a racial/ethnic type.

Where ethno-nationalisms occur - including ones where such rage, uncertainty and fear of impurity are expressed - they are not counters to globalisation processes (even where they see themselves as such) but are integral to it. In the same way, the Holocaust and modernity, seemingly irreconcilable, were all part of *one* process (Bauman 1989, 1998).

The gendered representations of new ethno-nationalisms are similar to those of previous nationalistic discourses. However, in the current proliferation of wars and militarisms, such neo-nationalist notions have been carried through in rather different conditions - of which the more generalised risk and insecurity of post-modernity and of globalisation are important (Bauman 1995; Gray 1998). As outlined, one such response is a scenario in which the body - always gendered - becomes the central site of ethnic violence.

*Most feminists who have addressed international politics have urged a focus not on war but militarisation, since it is militaristic culture which legitimises violence as a way of resolving conflicts, of establishing and maintaining power hierarchies within and between states*

### Militarised Masculinity

Most feminists who have addressed international politics have urged a focus not on war but militarisation, since it is militaristic culture which legitimises violence as a way of resolving conflicts, of establishing and maintaining power hierarchies within and between states.

Until recently, the military - both in terms of troops and policy - has been a masculine preserve, and it remains an institution that re-creates and reworks gender relations locally and internationally (Enloe 1987). Glib distinctions between wartime and peacetime are challenged by this perspective, since the power of the military within the politics and economics of nations, and the processes of militarisation, exist whether *war* is being fought or not. Time-limited armed conflicts must, therefore, be located within wider social processes, which have become increasingly the concern of women from various Third World countries where foreign military bases have been located, and/or where their national

state is explicitly militarised. How gender is deployed in the development and changing forms of militarisation has become an important arena of feminist investigation.

State institutions for organised violence have historically and cross-culturally been dependent on maleness, and this is the outcome of explicit political choices. The commonality constructed through militarised masculinity has facilitated the overriding of class, status and ethnic differences between troops and officers. The content of recent debates about allowing women in combat roles and ending the ban on gay men and lesbians within the military merely serve to confirm the historical centrality of heterosexual masculinity in militarisation.

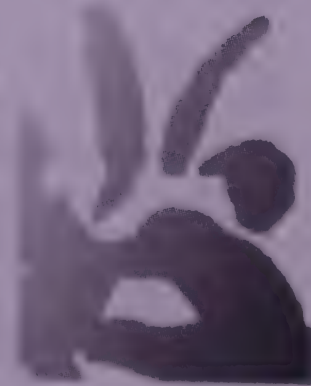
Source: Extracts from Globalisation, States and Women's Agency; States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance; Ed. Susie Jacob, Ruth Jacobson, Jennifer Marchbank.

## Women and Homeland?

*I don't have a homeland; the entire world is my homeland; it's all the same to me where I was born" – how many times have I heard such statements. Although I realised that they were meant to express an emotional distance from states and governments, I felt that they belied a forced suppression; at any rate, that they were full of traps. That's why I'd like to see this problem discussed at our meeting. To say that you come from nowhere, to say that you don't have anything to do with the country you were born in, in which you live everyday; that you don't have anything to do with the landscape surrounding you; to express your indifference toward your people and its historical identity – that seems to be a bad starting point, moreover a sort of arrogance. It's arrogant to negate the thousand bonds, which inspire us, or oppress us. Our belonging to the female sex is not a sufficient definition of our identity, for that belonging does not unfold itself in a vacuum. Even relationships between women from different countries cannot be realised through suppression of the meaning that belonging to a specific environment has for each of us, for that would mean denying the experiences to be exchanged in such relationships.*

*Women don't live in utopias but in concrete places. However, although partly political, the maps showing their places are different from the maps of male geographers and historians because their female reality is located in space in a different fashion.*

*That comes from their deep respect and care for the space they live in and is part of a symbolic order of things whose contours can be discerned. Even if we have chosen matria, motherland, instead of patria, fatherland, as our homeland, we have to keep in mind that the matria too, has its geography: its rivers, mountains, towns, villages, populated and deserted places. Matria is not an impersonal horizon. Those of us who insist that "it is all the same to them where they were born" forget their indebtedness to their mother tongue, the language of their mothers.*





*How can anyone say that she/he is indifferent to the sounds reverberating in us, the sounds of our childhood?! They are our abode in the reality of signs. When we, who are inspired by our ties with places, deny the significance of such ties we speak the language of an ideology likely to cause confusion. We should therefore try to avoid it. Instead, we should talk about our belonging as the connective tissue in the self-spun fabric of our life-space, which is entirely different from political entities resting upon the idea of nation or state. Statements such as "I don't have a homeland" or "I come from nowhere", which could be heard at meetings with women from ex-Yugoslavia, belie another problem. Croatian, Macedonian and Albanian women, that is women from endangered nations, cling to their belonging to them, whereas women from Serbia almost always express their uprootedness and distance, motivated mainly by the feeling of guilt because of the actions of "their" government. Strangely enough, those who renounced all ties with the nation they normally belong to, prompted "the other party" to align itself nationally.*

*What at first seemed to be a basis of understanding became a source of misunderstanding. Immoderate and undifferentiated attitudes on the one side, confusion and dismay on the other, in addition to the false expectations raised by the myth of a harmony among all women of the world by virtue of their belonging to the same sex – all this made the already complex situation almost hopeless.*

*The main obstacle to a real understanding, which needs to be removed (and I believe that most of us have begun doing that), is the illusion of a harmonious state in which the natural pluralism of opinions and interests could be reduced to a conflict-free unanimity: the need for "unanimity" has only veiled real experience as well as the concrete results of the efforts to alleviate the consequences of this horrible war. However, everyone who knows what real pluralism is must be aware of the fact that, incompatible with unanimity, it presupposes constant effort to find a compromise through active mediation and negotiations. Many things have changed during the past two years, the years of our friendship.*

*Many obstacles and reasons for confusion have been removed. It has become easier to tackle the problem of "female nationalism". Is it a "genuine" nationalism or is it a misplaced and politically manipulated love of one's homeland? After all, what interest could women possibly have in that specifically male invention called "nationalism" which has always had fatal consequences for them".*

**Tiziana Plebani**

Source : Women for Peace



## Militarisation: The War Against Human Security

*Rapporteurs*

*Mililani Trask, Hawaii and Susanna Ounei,  
Kanak Islands.*

In a very interactive workshop, the first part of the discussion revolved around the many faces of militarism while in the second half, a lot of time went into discussing solutions.

### The Many Faces of Militarism

The impact in areas of direct conflict and warfare, it was expressed, could be felt at various levels. This included not only the deaths of military and civil citizens but also the degradation of land and environment; allocation of badly needed resources for war and not to food, health and education, which leads to the disruption of the social fabric; it also leads to the rise of military prostitution, AIDS and the legitimisation of institutions like the comfort women; intervention in the internal affairs of community.

Intervention of outside nations nurtures unholy economic partnerships through the military industrial complexes. Strong military presence in areas where there is an absence of wars, impacts the community at various levels. The influx of military personnel changes society in terms of environmental degradation, increase in crime, prostitution and AIDS. Racial and community segregation was also observed as a phenomena.

There was condemnation of the Security Council of the UN where The Big Five (China, US, France, Russia, Britain), who produce 80% of the weaponry, have conflicts of interest. The UN violates its own charter when it moves from *peacekeeping* to *enforcement*. In many cases, war is a lucrative business and considered an economic

### Dennis Halliday *Roundtable Participant*

Now, those five member states (permanent members of UN) decided that war needed a new approach. So they set up the United Nations, but they had learnt from experiences with the League of Nations, so they established the Security Council with five permanent members. Those permanent members have the veto power. Now the five permanent members of the Security Council, which is charged with the task of maintaining peace throughout the world, together produce and sell 80% of the arms that kill women and children and men all over the world today.



*So it is a major problem in the United Nations itself. The fact is we have an organisation that has a good charter, has put out many different international conventions - whether it's human rights, or the rights of women, rights of the child etc - but the fact remains that it is compromised by its very origins and by the fact that today the United Nations is run by countries that were the producers of the world. Secondly, the Security Council also is beginning, I believe, to abuse its own charter. Now the charter (if you look at the Preamble to articles 1 and 2 about peace, non-violence, well-being of humankind) talks of all the good things that you and I want for our countries and our people, our children and our women. Slowly we are beginning to see that the charter is being abused. If you go to article 41 of chapter 7, that's the article that allows the United Nations to impose sanctions. You just heard from Iraq today about the impact of sanctions on that particular country. That is a violent act. That non-violent provision in Article 41 has become a violent act of war. In Article 41 we have the capacity of the United Nations to use armed force.*

*Now traditionally in the UN, peacekeeping meant putting UN troops between warring factions. For instance in Sierra Leone there is a government and a rebel force. The idea is that the UN goes in between and keeps them apart until there's some sort of peace process. That also has changed. Now we have a concept, which was put together by Boutros Ghali, back in 1992, that allows enforcement. That means the UN uses troops and those troops actually use force against one side or the other of the equation. Now it is a judgment fault. I personally don't believe in killing anybody. I think non-violence is the only way to get this world back on its feet. So you have the UN getting into a dangerous area such as enforcement. So I think we see them making new rules for themselves. For example, China goes into Tibet. I am not getting into the argument of whether Tibet is originally part of China or not, but the fact is that terrible violence and a large loss of life has resulted from the Chinese invasion of Tibet. More recently we have Chechnya that has been invaded by Russia. Thousands of people, particularly women and children, have lost their lives. Again an act of violence.*

## Solutions

There was much support for peace education and training. People should be encouraged to understand and use conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation.

In Sierra Leone it was observed that economic licensing of diamonds has stopped the sale of diamonds, which was providing money for war. UN peacekeeping did work here.

We need to focus from war/peace to a new paradigm, a return to the idea of natural/women's law. Fight war creatively; art and music are also social mechanisms for communication. We need to use Hague Peace Process and UN resolutions.

Nuclear victims in Japan have organised and helped to force Japan to acknowledge the truth of the past and provide medical help to victims. Victims of nuclear war are living evidence of the evils of war. They have the power to change the policy of the Japanese government. Nuclear and peace movements have also expanded because Japanese have helped others (Pacific) get organised. Result: good global anti-nuclear work.

We advocated the use of government lobbying to get resources committed to community – attack military budgets – cut military spending for more social services. People at home will see the benefits – better education, health and less guns, planes and bombs.

We also felt the need to create a public and media campaign to expose who really benefits from war – industrial complex – gun sales and manufacturers; we need to expose those behind war.

Many times the US and France have given guns to others to fight war on their land. War is not between people fighting, but it is really a war of political ideology. This needs to be exposed through education.

The need was also expressed to get organisations like the Quakers to become active in conflict resolution in the regions, and push governments to develop reconciliation models in areas of conflict and develop peace journals, media and private sectors to spread peace ideas.



*Both of those two issues - or if you'd rather compare the Americans in Vietnam or the Americans in Panama or surveillance in the Caribbean - were never brought to the Security Council. The violence that was represented in Vietnam or in Panama or in Kosovo does not go on the agenda of the Security Council. Again you have the United Nations turning its back on very violent military actions that they don't have the courage to deal with it or because it has old relationships among the five permanent members. Very lazy, very nice, but it means we have a world that is becoming increasingly violent.*

*And the last example I give is on Iraq. Iraq is a victim of the United Nations Security Council corrupted by the United States and mediated by the United Kingdom. At the moment, we have the embargo there that has now been in existence for ten years. That embargo has become a form of warfare. The embargo has killed over 10 million Iraq people in the last ten years. Of that number probably six or seven hundred are children. They are dying unnecessarily because of the sanctions regime that has been imposed on this country. As I said, sanctions as part of the charter is supposed to be non-violent. But when you sustain a sanction regime like the one they have in Iraq, which is totally comprehensive, and you deny the economy of Iraq its very basic income and its capacity to function, then the UN sanctions are a form of violence.*

*The international system, with its economic inequality, its lack of ecological concern and its militarised structures, is the cause of insecurity and this in turn is related to the power relations embedded in the system. Not until a fundamental reconceptualisation of these root causes is undertaken will any progress be made towards a more just and secure world. Promises that the global market will raise standards of concern for the environment, human rights and individual security are illusory and are to be resisted. We must have the will to dream alternatives based on issues of social justice and refuse to be limited by the proposals on offer.*

Lee-Anne Broadhead in *Re-Packaging Notions of Security: A Skeptical Feminist Response to Recent Efforts, States of Conflict: Gender Violence and Resistance*



## Racism: The War of Exclusion

*Rapporteur*

*Ruth Manorama, India*

We began with a discussion on what racism does to people. We agreed that racism denies power, privilege and status to one group and affords the same to the other. Racism has a system of beliefs that has its material basis in sociological, economical and social spheres. Racism is not an individual problem of relating to each other but is an institutionalised form built on graded inequality.

We also expanded the scope of racism from the racial discrimination based on colour to other areas such as the caste discrimination experienced by a large number of Dalits in the subcontinent of India and other South Asian countries, which is built on the theory of pollution and purity.

What racism results in is a total denial of people's, especially women's, experiences. It invisibilises the people, not recognising them as human beings, not recognising their human existence. Women become victims of sexist and racist attacks.

It is also the denial of access to education, employment and enjoyment of economic resources and benefits that are due to them and the denial of human rights.

So racism has been discussed in our group within the paradigm/framework of the denial of people's experiences and benefits. We raised challenging questions such as whether racism should be based on colour pigmentation or if we were going to expand the scope from colour to other racial discrimination. The question was also of how we address the internalisation of racist and xenophobic practices and prejudices, from both sides.

Other questions arose concerning the refugees from other African countries entering into South Africa: how are we going to deal with the refugee question? How are we going to deal with other blacks in South Africa? How are we going to address racism within our own communities, blacks versus blacks?

We decided that the intersectionality of race, class and gender needs to be understood in its totality. The experiences women face under racism is definitely different from the experiences of men. How are we going to address and heal this process?

We also discussed the roles that landlessness and economic inequality play in racism and xenophobia. We have addressed this whole question of racism as a denial of opportunity and access to resources. How are we going to address landlessness and economic disparities in this context?

We discussed the question of overemphasis of language within racial and xenophobic practices. What have been the languages that have been used, how do we address and change them in our textbooks, in our education material? How should this problem be approached?

What role can media and religion, which often legitimise racism, play to combat racism and xenophobia? Are religions going to give redress in addressing the question of racism? Do we go back to religion? We recognised that the media plays a crucial role in addressing the question of apartheid. But what role will they play now?

An important question that was placed to the group was: what is the agenda, or comprehensive programme for social justice after the end of apartheid? Will a comprehensive programme evolve? The question is not only to the nation state but also the women's movement. How do we create spaces for rehabilitation and healing processes for the racially oppressed communities?

The severity of caste-based discrimination related to descent/decent occupation is on par with racism and apartheid. In our group there were three Dalit women from the untouchable communities who narrated their stories and our resource person said, "I can see the parallel between racism and casteism." So how is the international community, especially the women's movement, actively going to address this question and intensely involve themselves in combating these other racial discriminations in the world?

The last question: how do victims of apartheid relate and build alliances and solidarity with refugees from other countries who are warring in the neighbouring countries? How do they build solidarity and support between the 260 million Dalits and the racially oppressed in South Africa, who are discriminated on the basis of origin and occupation?

## *Beyond White and the Other*

*Look, I deny you -  
You who sit on my body  
And make your place  
And make your space  
I DENY YOU.*

*I eat fruits of wisdom  
I mix herbs of care  
I drink waters of spirituality  
And  
I DENY YOU.*

*I deny your destruction  
Of the world and me  
I call up my past  
And meditate with ancestors  
And  
I DENY YOU.*

*Look, I deny your breaking up  
Of the body and soul  
I am one, the world is me  
The one is the other  
And the other is me*

*Look,  
I have denied you.*

Kaanitah Cassim



## Indigenous Life Worlds: The War Against Forgotten Wisdoms

*Rapporteur*

*Victoria Tauli Corpuz, Philippines*

*We* looked at the issue of forgotten wisdoms, which are not really forgotten but are still very much alive in each and every indigenous person who continues to practice and believe in them.

We agreed that indigenous wisdoms and knowledges are also used against women who are their mentors, bearers and transmitters. We have seen that colonisation has a fundamental assumption that the ways of the colonisers are inherently better than the ways of the colonised and indigenous peoples, and that this assumption justified and led to the denigration and destruction of indigenous cosmologies, spiritualities or world views, economic systems, cultures and governance systems.

Indigenous peoples were not only physically displaced from their territories but also forcibly taken from their parents, as in the *stolen generations* of Australia, in order to make them forget who they are and turn against their own people and their own heritage. *Forced assimilation* was institutionalised through government laws and policies.

We have also seen and experienced how indigenous knowledge on resource management, such as the use of indigenous seeds and traditional medicinal plants as well as indigenous religion and spirituality, were labeled as backward, witchcraft, superstition or *heathen*. However, pharmaceutical and biotechnology corporations are aggressively appropriating this knowledge and claiming intellectual property rights over them. The new science and technology theories and products being developed, like Information Technology, are facilitating the appropriation of this knowledge. Appropriation also occurs through genetic engineering and the computerised reproduction and commercialisation of indigenous arts and crafts. The international laws that are being created by WTO (World Trade Organisation), such as TRIPS (Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights) agreements are shaped to allow the patenting of life forms and indigenous knowledge. And countries are now obliged to change their laws to conform to this TRIPS agreement.

We have seen, however, that there is a dynamic resistance from the indigenous peoples against globalisation, as in 1994 when the Zapatistas in Chiapas rose up against the Mexican Government because of its membership in NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). We have seen the fight of indigenous people in the Philippines, in Ecuador, and in Indonesia against biotechnology corporations that are coming in to steal the resources that were left in our lands. In this context we called on the World Court of Women to support some of the campaigns we have undertaken and that are gaining worldwide support.

We are asking that support against the patenting of life forms becomes integral in the agendas of women's movements all over the world.

We support also the recommendations that have come up from the study *Stolen Generations of Australia*. We are asking that the Australian government implement recommendations that include an acknowledgement of the historical injustice done against the Australian Aborigines.

We call for the implementation of the San Andes accords between the Government of Mexico and the Zapatistas and to support the demands put by the Zapatistas to the Mexican Government in the forthcoming negotiations.

Since we had people who were included in the witchcraft violence we also ask that the South African Government and the appropriate agencies should seriously address the issue and bring justice to those who have been driven away from their homes and those who have been stigmatised.

Finally we ask for support for the recommendations of the recently held International Conference on Conflict Resolution, Peace Building and Indigenous People, which was held in Manila last December. These recommendations propose how peace can be brought to indigenous peoples' territories and how women can become active members in bringing about peace and dealing with conflict.

We ask that these recommendations be adopted and supported by the *World Court of Women against War for Peace*.

## Against the Violence of Recolonisation

*The resistance offered by us indigenous peoples against monoculturalisation and development, is the biggest reason for the remaining cultural and biological diversity in this world. Today, with the consolidation and expansion of the forces of the global market economy, this diversity is gravely threatened more than ever before. Economic growth, universalisation, globalisation, and trade liberalisation, are institutionalised as the measures of progress and development.*

*Why do we resist? How have we been resisting? And what is the price we have to pay and continue to pay for this resistance? Is it worth continuing this resistance?*

*Since we were born we have been brainwashed by the school, the church, and the government to believe that our ways are those of the savage, the barbarian, the heathen. My grandparents and parents, who all belong to the Kankanaey-Igorot peoples of the Cordillera region in the Philippines, went through this. The cross, the gun, the public school, and the market, were the most effective instruments used by the colonisers to make us believe that we are, indeed, an inferior people. The songs we were taught to sing were "planting rice is never fun, or America, America,... and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea". We were fined when we spoke our native tongue in school. Some of our peoples got colonised and their ultimate dream is to get a white-collared job, never to hold the dirty soil again, and to go to America. But many resisted.*



*The embers of resistance resided in the hearts of our elders and these embers developed into flames among some of us who were born in the fifties. I remember my fights with my lowland classmates who, because I am Igorot, asked where my tail was. I remember how my father told me never to be ashamed to say I was an Igorot. But I also sadly remember how many of the Igorot students denied that they were Igorots.*

*Fortunately enough, while I was a high school student in Manila in the late 1960s, the movement for nationalism and democracy became vibrant. The Vietnam War was raging and the students protested against the imperialism of United States of America. We restudied our history and we found out that we have been told lies. Our history books were written by American authors or American-trained Filipinos who trivialised our people's struggles and our heroes. I became part of a group of Igorot students who linked up our indigenous peoples struggles against discrimination and oppression to the national struggle for sovereignty and democracy. We braved the truncheons and the guns during protest rallies and we did massive education work and organising work among our co-students. In 1972, when President Marcos declared martial law, the organisations we created were considered illegal and therefore had to go underground.*

*The threat of being arrested, raped or salvaged language for disappeared in the Philippines], hung over our heads every day. Still we persisted. After school, I decided to go back home and do organising and education work in the villages, in my home province. At this time the resistance of many of our villages against the Chico River dam project, logging corporations owned by Marcos cronies, etc. developed and heightened. These were dangerous and exciting times. The different tribes who used to have tribal wars between themselves created peace pacts to unite against the World Bank, the logging corporations and the government who is the chief implementer of these development projects.*

*We have decided to fight against the development plan that the government made for us. Our women, who are the main subsistence food producers, the transmitters of our indigenous culture and traditions, are actively participating in these struggles. We had to do mass mobilisations where everybody, women and men, old and young, had roles to play. Many of the educated, colonised Igorots despised what we were doing, saying that there is no way we can fight progress. Our village people persisted, however, and we had our victories. The World Bank-funded Chico River Dam Project was eventually cancelled. In fact, this struggle had the distinction of being one of the first World Bank Projects that was defeated by indigenous peoples. The logging and milling operations of the Cellophil Resources Corporation was stopped.*



*We paid a price for this resistance. We were branded as communists and subversives. Many of our villages were heavily militarised, bombed, strafed, and burned. Some of our key leaders, like Macling Dulag, Ama Ngayaan, etc. were assassinated; many were arbitrarily arrested and detained, and tortured. Villages were made into strategic hamlets and the people were not allowed to go to their fields nor visit other communities. The phenomena of internal refugees developed.*

*Women got raped. I clearly remember how a woman in Abra, who was pregnant, was raped and killed with her two children, by the military. Women were instrumentalised by the military.*

*They married them or made them their mistresses to extract information about the leaders and the organisers in the communities. Divisions within communities were created and exacerbated. Old and young men and women were recruited to become spies and join the paramilitary formations. Some tribes were armed to fight against the neighbouring tribe. Families were separated and communities were broken. Even the practice of traditional rituals was prohibited. Under the guise of counter-insurgency operations some of our forests were burnt, and people were evacuated from their villages. Socio-economic projects which we helped set up were destroyed. Women weavers' cooperatives and even day-care centers, which our women's organisations were running, were branded as communist fronts. All these are still continuing.*

*We struggled at the local levels, but we also took part in national campaigns and even brought our issues and demands to the international arena, the United Nations. We lobbied our Congress after the dictator was ousted in 1986. Because of our strong lobby we managed to have our rights to ancestral lands, enshrined in our new Constitution. However we have not been successful in having an enabling ancestral land law enacted in Congress. Most likely, we will never win because now our government is selling our lands and resources to the highest bidders.*

*Our government has prioritised the passing of laws that will attract more foreign investors to come in and extract our resources. The Mining Act of 1995 was passed, which allows foreign corporations to lease a minimum of 81,000 hectares for 75 years, put in 100% foreign equity, and repatriate their profits 100%. It also gives them the right to remove the people from the mineral lands and to use strip mining to recover their profits faster. Most of the mineral lands in the Philippines are found in the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples.*

*Our women in the mining communities of Itogon, Benguet are still actively resisting the further expansion of open pit mining operations in their communities. This has been going on for almost four years now. We anticipate however that with the passage of the Mining Act, the government will once more clamp down on the peoples' protests against its aggressive liberalisation schemes. In fact, President Ramos has succeeded in having the Congress pass laws that will give him emergency powers over almost anything. He can cut down the process of environmental impact assessments for priority projects; he has emergency powers to deal with the water and energy crisis [which when translated means not having to go through public bidding, he can just designate which corporations can invest in energy or water projects, etc]. He will also have emergency powers to deal with protests, which are slowing down implementation of projects. The ground for the resurgence of state fascism is being laid down in seemingly benevolent terms.*

*Now, we are being colonised anew, and not only are our lands and mineral resources being appropriated but also our biological diversity, our intellectual commons, and worst our human genes, are being appropriated to be patented, commodified and used in international trade.*



*This intellectual property rights regime which privatises knowledge and patents life forms, commercialises and commodifies human and animal genetic resources, is despicable and immoral. It is anti-ethical to the indigenous values of collectivity, sharing, nurturing, and stewardship.*

*With the membership of our country into the World Trade Organisation, the government is passing laws and policies that will facilitate the further opening up of the economy to foreign investors. It has passed an Executive Order, which facilitates the entry of bio prospectors into the country to appropriate our biological diversity. Our patent laws which are a clone of the United States patent laws, are further beefed up to guarantee the foreign corporations their intellectual property rights. With these, the role of our women as the custodians of our*

*indigenous seeds and medicinal plants will once again be appropriated. Compulsory patenting laws, which have allowed local companies to reprint foreign books and produce drugs without having to pay the expensive royalty fees on grounds of public welfare and safety, are now scrapped. In the meantime, the entry of cable television and satellite media, has been liberalised.*

*We are witnessing an era that is reminiscent of how colonisation took place in our countries. Now, we are being colonised anew, and not only are our lands and mineral resources being appropriated but also our biological diversity, our intellectual commons, and worst our human genes, are being appropriated to be patented, commodified and used in international trade.*

*Today vocational and technological training is imparted to our people to enable them to become skilled workers in electronics and assembly line factories. We are told that we should go into eco-tourism to bring in foreign exchange. Our agricultural lands are being converted into plantations that will produce cut flowers and exotic vegetables, or into golf courses, or real-estate subdivisions. The fast erosion of our indigenous values and worldviews and cosmology is taking place. Because of displacements, militarisation, poverty, and also the increasing desire to accumulate consumer goods, which have become the symbols of progress, many of our young women have opted to become domestic helpers overseas. No matter that they are subject to the worst forms of sexual violence and harassments.*

*All these tell us that the destruction of our biological and cultural diversity is going to happen at a pace we have never seen before. This tells us that we have to further step up our resistance to the forces that will finally subjugate us into surrendering our right to be different, to self-determination, and our rights to our territories and resources.*

*The violence of the globalising and universalising ethic of the international economic order prevailing today, which is dominated by the rich industrialised nations and their institutions, has to be resisted. The imposition of the western concept and practice of intellectual property rights should be opposed. This intellectual property rights regime which privatises knowledge and patents life forms, commercialises and commodifies human and animal genetic resources, is despicable and immoral. It is anti-ethical to the indigenous values of collectivity, sharing, nurturing, and stewardship.*

*Indigenous peoples' movements, which are comprehensive and holistically address oppressions based on race, class, gender, nationality, and ethnicity, should be provided support. These movements should flourish amidst the overwhelming domination of powerful countries and transnational corporations. This is the only way in which we can ensure the diversity of cultures, peoples, economic and social systems, and biological resources in this world. Indigenous peoples are the living symbols of what we have lost in this world because of colonialism, racism, class and gender oppression.*

*We have to fan further the flames of resistance burning in the hearts of indigenous women. We are still paying the price of asserting our rights to self-determination and to our territories and biological and intellectual resources. We cannot leave to our children and our children's children a world that is monoculturalised and hegemonised by the rules of the colonisers. The only legacies we can pass on to them are our stories of resistance. Let us allow them to continue making songs, poems, and dances out of these stories so the next generations will never forget, as we have not been allowed to forget by our martyrs and our ancestors.*

**Victoria Tauli Corpuz**

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz is part of the Cordillera Women's Movement in the Philippines. This testimony was presented at 'In the Court of Women' - The World Public Hearing on Crimes Against Women; organised by the AWHRC during the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September 1995. She spoke as a 'Daughter of Maat', as a voice of resistance against the violence of our times.



## Trafficking: The War Against Women

*Rapporteur*

*Nelia Sancho, Philippines*

The international roundtable on *trafficking in women as wars against women* provided a platform for the World Court participants to reflect and analyse the situation of trafficking in women and to focus on trafficking in women in the context of wars and armed conflict situations.

There were various speakers who tackled the following topics and themes: first presenter was Van of Cambodia, a trafficking survivor who testified on the trafficking of Cambodian women in the context of the country's post-conflict situation. Van shared her own story which she said echoed the suffering of thousands of Cambodian women today.

June and Duc of Thailand each gave a presentation of the situation of trafficking in both Thailand and Burma. Duc presented the quilt of Burmese women survivors of trafficking who asked that it be brought to the World Court of Women. June reflected on trafficking as a form of war against women, and in the case of Burmese women, she shared the situation of trafficking in the context of militarisation and ethnic persecution. Bernadette gave a presentation on the situation of trafficking in the South African context. Three other speakers shared the various dialogues and consultations taking place among women's groups in Asia: the Kolhapur Conference and the trafficking and prostitution discourses was presented by Meena Seshu of India; Prof. Jiaxiang Wang shared the highlights of the October 2000 Beijing Workshop on Migration and Trafficking; and Meena Poudel gave an update on the South Asian women's groups lobbying initiative at the SAARC Second People's Forum. A participant from Kosovo came to discuss the Kosovo context of trafficking in women.

The roundtable participants discussed the roots of trafficking as a form of war against women and reflected on its intensification in the era of globalisation. Globalisation has deepened the women's historically vulnerable situation and low social status. It has increased the feminisation of poverty, the feminisation of labour, particularly labour migration, and the exploitation of women's labour. Women today comprise the majority of the world's migrant population. And in becoming the world's newest and cheapest labour resource, women's vulnerability to the violence of trafficking has never before been so present.

In times of war and armed conflicts, the purposes and forms of trafficking in women include sexual slavery for the armed troops, forced labour for military stations and to meet the needs of the armed forces (the cases of Burmese women from the ethnic communities, and those from Kosovo were cited as examples). Even in times of peace, women are used to serve the rest and recreation needs of UN peacekeeping forces (such as those in Cambodia) and for the military forces of the foreign army who are stationed in military bases (such as those in Okinawa).

The participants of the roundtable affirmed that the buying, selling and transport of people or the trafficking of women, men and children – by force, deceit and means of coercion - and the abuse and exploitation of the labour and bodies of people in situations of forced labour, slavery and slavery-like conditions, has emerged as one of the most extremely profitable and largest business operations being undertaken by organised crime syndicates who usually enjoy the protection of some state authorities. It was also noted that in order to effectively promote efforts to combat trafficking, the following issues must be clearly addressed by all concerned: the *invisibility* or *untouchability* of powerful organised crime syndicates who control the traffic in persons by sheer power, money and political/state connections; the lack of understanding on just what trafficking is, its root causes and patterns; the tendency by states to use the trafficking issue as a basis for *immigration control*; and lastly, the absence of consensus to give recognition and protection to the rights of persons who have been trafficked or are vulnerable to trafficking.

Several recommendations were put forward by the speakers for the consideration of participants but a general principle was raised in relation to this: that any effort to combat trafficking in women, as in all efforts to combat the various forms of violence against women, must begin by recognising the *agency* and *potential* of women to take control of their lives and situations, and in building and supporting their capacities towards improving their lives and enhancing their autonomy and self-determination.



## Refugees: War against the Other

*Rapporteur*

*Cate Breen, Australia*

Through the sharing of stories and through the dialogue of women at the roundtable, we learnt of the importance of providing a space for refugee women's voices to be heard. We heard from women from Bosnia, Sudan, Rwanda, Palestine, Somalia, Afghanistan, Malawi, Burundi and South Africa. Each of these women shared the experience of being removed or forced to leave their homeland. The safety of themselves and their families was constantly threatened or at great risk.

Each of the women expressed a feeling of helplessness and loss of hope with the UN and the various conventions. They felt that these human rights instruments did little to address the rights, needs and realities of refugees.

Each of the women felt concerned that whilst the world was aware and knew a lot about the UN and human rights law, they seemed to know little or '*do little*' to address the situation or suffering in their parts of the world. They expressed '*we feel invisible to the world*'.

They came up with a recommendation that refugee women from different communities have the opportunity to come together, share stories and experiences, learn from each other, and find strength and solutions. In response to this, refugee women were invited to the Refugee Court, which will take place in Sydney, Australia in December 2001.

Many of the women expressed the dangers they faced in the refugee camps. They expressed that they were places that reinforced and continued the war. Women discussed how adults and children were recruited from the camps into the military and armed combat. They also discussed the fact that the camps often became an *arms depot*.

Women also expressed with great concern that the camps were where sexual exploitation, rape and extreme violation of their rights occurred. Some women discussed experiences of being sold and abducted into sex slave trade from the camps. Women were sold to the opposition forces and were an easy method of earning money for the *seller*. Women felt that it was an important issue that needed to be addressed, as women are a mere number in the refugee camp and thus their abduction and *sale* is very easy.

The women asked for alternatives to the refugee camps- "*keeping us as refugees in camps is isolating and exposes us to more abuse, neglect and victimisation. Camps reduce refugees to being beggars.....*"

Environmental disasters have a more profound effect on refugees living in camps or temporary housing. The example of Afghanistan was given - when people are starving, freezing and without their basic needs being met, *they become aggressive and like animals in a quest for food and blankets.*

There are so many reasons that people were separated or forced to flee - in Palestine they talked of separation by religion. They also discussed the use of rape to terrify the masses and force them to flee. Many people discussed the use of camps and the exploitation they had suffered in these places. They talked of the camps as *forgotten lands*.

One woman from Sudan spoke for the first time of an experience of being sold as a slave - she explained how women are captured and treated worse than animals. The punishment is through rape and forced impregnation. The perpetrator does this to keep the enemy alive in. Her testimony was very moving to all in the roundtable. The women agreed that it is important to talk of rape differently and conceptualise it differently - to challenge attitudes and give women choices.

A refugee woman from Sarajevo explained how distressed she felt by the way aid was delivered in war times. *War is business and help is business too.*



*Where was the voice of women at that time? Voiceless people became victims. This is the weapon for us to defend ourselves.* The women from Sarajevo also explained that women needed to be included in the efforts towards the prevention of war and in the peace process. *Our war was a war of misunderstanding.*

Whilst the women felt concerned that governments and nations were often the main perpetrators of violations of their human rights, many women felt it was important that Human Rights instruments and international law be translated into domestic law with concrete implementation strategies and measures to evaluate government's commitments.

We challenged the gendered nature of the refugee convention - it was repeatedly found that it did not recognise or respond to the women's experience. It does not provide solutions for women. The majority of the refugee women discussed experiences of rape and sexual violations in the context of war or conflict. This was not sufficient ground for refugee status.

The issue of challenging language and the dominant discourse was also frequently discussed. Women are victimised - not victims. The language of protection, which is the UNHCR's core mandate, needs to be challenged towards a language of empowerment.

A challenge to the language may result in new concepts and new and more empowering ways of working with refugee women. In resettlement, the language of *assimilation, integration and tolerance* need to be challenged with more of a focus on *respect*.

Many of the refugee women who had been resettled in other countries recommended that refugee-receiving countries are educated about the situation that force refugees to flee their homes and seek asylum. They felt that the majority of people in the local communities of host countries were insensitive to their experiences. They received racist attacks and comments, were excluded from the local community and opportunities. There were expectations on them to integrate and behave in acceptable ways but with little regard, concern or understanding of the experiences they had survived. They also wanted people to understand why they had to stay in the host countries and why it was not a matter of choice for them to leave the place they were born in their homeland.

At the end of the roundtable, participants were given a piece of purple cardboard, which was a piece in the puzzle that made up their story. I gave each of them a piece of the cardboard puzzle to record what they felt was the most important issue they wanted to bring to the roundtable. They could write words alone or they could also write sentences and paragraphs. They created a symbol for women filled with the group's words of hope and desire.

**Nooria from Afghanistan wrote:**

*I belong to Afghanistan - the world's largest forgotten tragedy. It is more than two decades that my country is burning in flames of war. Fighting, burning of houses, arresting of men, destruction, beating, lashing, insulting, execution, cutting of hands and other atrocities are the common jobs of fundamentalist parties in my country. My country has now changed to a graveyard and women and men are under torture physically and mentally. Five million of our people came to Iran and Pakistan and they are now living like animals. I am a widow and I know that this will change only with the struggle for democracy and freedom.*

**Alice from southern Sudan wrote:**

*"Continue to talk about the experiences no matter how horrible they are - this would help wash away the hurt and bring sanity to the speaker and the listener, so they both can strategise a lasting solution. Let the wars unite women rather than divide us - even if we come from the opposite sides - because we are all women. Participation in the women's movement in the host country would help towards highlighting the refugee plight and activate the organs of the state."*

**Burundi wrote:**

*Stop using the refugee camps as bases for the continuation of war (i.e. military training and recruiting, arms depot etc).*

**Conclusion**

The people of South Africa explained to us that the war of apartheid made people turn to the gun to fight and defend. Similarly, the Courts of Women and the roundtable taught us that the voiceless become victims and that the voice is the instrument that can prevent conflict from turning into war; it has the power to heal communities and individuals.





## The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court

*Sydney Australia,  
December 4, 2001*

The fourteenth World Court of Women was held in Sydney, Australia on December 4, 2001. It brought together Refugee and Indigenous women to present their stories in the traditional cultural arena of a women's circle. It put the focus on indigenous traditions and elders, and provided a strongly supportive environment for women to be heard as they cried, laughed, watched, danced and sang their stories of survival.

We who were asked to bear witness to these stories were moved to accept the responsibility placed on us through this shared experience. We will not sit idly by and allow things to happen without response. We are involved. There is only 'us'.

### **The Vision**

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court provided a space for women to share their stories and their experience of discrimination and oppression, their pain, their hopes and fears, their past and their futures.

Together, we examined the notion of racism as the root cause of the discrimination and the thread which bound together the experience of refugee and indigenous women. The day allowed us to identify the similarities in the experience of two groups of women, which at first glance appeared quite different. It provided us with the opportunity to tie these threads into ropes of solidarity between the women who suffer from discrimination and oppression and those who can begin to comprehend its origins and causes.





The Court enabled us to challenge the existing human rights paradigm and to explore new ways to ensure that across the world, discrimination and oppression are acknowledged and addressed in all their manifestations. The removal of gender discrimination was acknowledged as a key to a better world for all.

We celebrated with music, poetry, tradition and ceremony, the strength of women in adversity.

### The Court

Interested women from many different communities provided the organisation and resources from which the Court grew. A series of planning and consultation meetings were held (called *Talanoa*, from the Fijian word for storytelling) over nine months, and the concept of an Indigenous Circle of Elders arose from these meetings.

Once this was floated among refugee and indigenous communities, there were many who asked to take part - some to testify, and others as workers.

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court gave women the opportunity to share their stories through personal testimony, song, poetry and ceremony. It was an incredibly moving experience, during which we cried and laughed together, despaired, and celebrated the strength of those who survive human rights abuses, together we created a vision of a better future.

Refugee women from Perth, South Australia, Bougainville and Sierra Leone, and Indigenous women from Queensland, Central Desert area, Melbourne, Sydney and other areas of New South Wales were able to attend to give their testimony.

Their stories were told in a circle of elders from the Aboriginal and Maori communities, who created a sacred space of safety and support. These women elders chanted a traditional welcome, and honoured all ancestors and friends who made up our shared histories.

A panel of human rights activists from the region were asked to respond to the testimonies, with a focus on the issues and commenting on the effectiveness of existing human rights instruments to address issues of racism and gender, as well as suggest new paths for the future. There was a balance of activists from the indigenous, community and government sectors.







A powerful feature of the event was the ceremony of recognition for the women and their testimonies, and the opportunity for witnesses to offer their wishes for a better future into stones which have been placed in a cairn to mark the event.

Resource information and a booklet was produced for every participant, outlining the purpose of the Court, the background to issues of intersectionality between gender and race, and providing information on specific participants and elders. The gumleaf was used as a symbol of Australia and the link between refugee and Indigenous women, and all participants received these leaves as a potent reminder of our links in this country.

Video presentations and links were also produced for use during the day, and the full proceedings were filmed and will be produced into a one hour documentary on the Court.

### Conclusion

The event provided a focus on the similarity of effects and experiences for refugee and indigenous women, from a range of vastly different circumstances.

The human rights paradigm does not allow for the multiple levels of disadvantage and oppression faced by women. It is apparent that our self interest, status, pride and delusions - whether of grandeur or denial - have all played a part in stopping these women telling of their life experiences sooner. We have been complicit in a system which provides little or no opportunity for them to gain redress.

We knew of the rapes and sexual torture. We had heard of them before.

To hear women speak from personal experience, of assault, devastation and death of their husbands and children, friends, parents and siblings, life and culture, told in such chilling detail - in some cases as much as 10 - 15 years after the event - was shocking. Those women who testified were truly courageous.

They are the true heroes. Not for them the race run with millions of dollars of support and sponsorships, nor the adulation of a country or sporting fans watching from the safety and security of their own loungeroom.





These women ran in a race for their lives, spurred on by real guns or 100 years of dispossession and colonisation; without support and no clue as to when or where the race would end. They survived.

Did they win? They spoke of guilt at their own survival when so many others did not. They spoke of the pain of loss. The fear for those left behind. The uncertainty of their status and standing in a new culture and place.

We think they are winners. They are here; they survived.

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court gave us a glimpse of women who are driven. They are making a new life, operating in a foreign culture and language - required to live up to the multiple requirements of the many labels they wear as women.

The women said thank you to those of us who heard them. Thank you for listening to our hearts and minds; for reaching out to us.

The Indigenous elders showed their support, and shared in the burden of pain and suffering. Aunty Ali Golding has undertaken a personal journey of healing for all the women who testified, to return the pain and suffering to the earth. The elders recognised this journey as necessary for so many women who suffer abuses and uncertainties, and who cry out to us in need. The stones, into which the wishes of all who witnessed the event were poured, will be returned to the land as a cairn to mark the Court.

*We who witnessed are stronger for the hearing. We laughed and cried, we were shocked and elated. We sang and danced.*

*We turned the concept of a 'court' into something powerful and healing for us all. And we survived the experience.*

Our congratulations and support go to all who took part in the day. You stepped outside your safe anonymity to take part in a sacred circle - a journey of healing.

Of this you can be proud.

Kiri Hata  
Chairperson, ANCORW

The Indigenous and Refugee Women's Human Rights Court was hosted by the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, the Australian National Committee on Refugee Women (ANCORW), the Centre for Refugee Research and the Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre (University of New South Wales).





## Truth Commissions and Tribunals: Do they have a place in Transitional Societies?

*Glenda Wildschut*

Paper presented for the Roundtable on  
International Peace Processes

Right at the onset of this paper I would like to say that very often Tribunals, Trials and Truth Commissions are placed in opposition to each other. My view is that both types of justice systems have their place. They often play very different roles in very different contexts. They both have important prerequisites for their efficacy. They both have merits and demerits. But both systems have an important outcome. *Justice*. Some argue that trials and tribunals are more firmly located in the *retributive justice* paradigm, while truth and reconciliation commissions are borne out of the notion of *restorative justice*.

Vaclav Havel, when he was the President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, during a speech he called the *Anatomy of Hate* in 1990 said:

*I am not an optimist because I am not sure that everything ends well, nor am I a pessimist because I am not sure that everything ends badly. I just carry hope in my heart. Hope is not a feeling of certainty that everything ends well. Hope is just a feeling that life and work have a meaning. It is not an estimate of the state of the world that surrounds you. It is a dimension of human existence.*

There is a further dimension to the optimism or hope that Havel speaks about. It is to do with the state of the world and wars. It is about the hope that wars will cease and that we will live in peace. Many attempts have been made to foster, advance and maintain peace in the world. If we cease to have hope then we will lose that war against destruction and evil. Such attempts are often more manifest in post conflict situations. A basic question confronting all transitional governments, of course, is whether to undertake the prosecution of the leaders of the ousted regime or their henchmen for the abuses they inflicted upon the nation. Some will argue that trial and punishment of these people is not only essential to achieve some degree of justice, but that a public airing and condemnation of their crimes is the best way to draw a line between the old and new governments, lest the public perceives the new authorities as simply more of the same. Others will claim that these are simply show trials unbecoming a democracy, that they are manifestations of the victor's justice, that the best way to rebuild and reconcile the nation is to leave the past behind by means of a blanket amnesty. In some cases, abuses have been committed both by the former government and by its opponents, and it can be argued that the best approach is to forgive the sins of both sides.

The debate rages on again and again. Following the death of Franco, the relatively peaceful Spanish transition was marked by such a mutual amnesty. In Greece, nearly twenty years after the conviction of junta leaders who had overseen the torture of hundreds, plans to release them from prison still prompted huge protests. In newly democratic Argentina and Chile, the prospect of trials for the gross violations of human rights that had occurred under the old regime provoked bold threats of military intervention and a return to the terror of the past. In our own country, South Africa, disagreements at the end of 1994 regarding amnesty threatened the stability of the new Government of National Unity.

*What standard of evidence is required to demonstrate that, rather than random events, these acts of persecution, corruption and violence were designed, or at least condoned, by those at the top? Conversely, how far down the chain should soldiers or bureaucrats be held liable for following the orders of their superiors in facilitating these abuses?*

International standards are evolving which help deal with this question; there is a growing consensus that, at least for the gross violations of human rights, a sweeping (or blanket) amnesty is impermissible.

When a decision is made to prosecute, the desire to use criminal sanctions against those who served the old regime may run directly counter to the development of a democratic legal order. The principles of *ex post facto* and *nulla poena sine lege*, for example, form one of the basic concepts of that legal order, barring the prosecution of anyone for an act which was not criminal at the time it was committed. At the very time that countries emerging from repressive regimes are committing themselves to these basic principles, the reality is that many of the acts that they desire to punish today were not crimes when they were committed under the former regime; they were often laudable and encouraged under the old system. In post-war France, for example, this issue was fiercely debated. Ultimately, thousands of people were prosecuted under a 1994 law establishing the new offense of *national indignity* for acts they had committed prior to the law's adoption in the immediate post-communist period, largely owing to the same *ex post facto* dilemma. German officials initiated proceedings against Erich Mielke, the former head of East Germany's Stasi secret police, not for any abuses of the hated Stasi, but for a murder he had allegedly committed half a century earlier - based on evidence extracted by Nazi police. Although some sort of justice might have been served by this trial, the Mielke persecution could not provide for East Germans the kind of catharsis that would be achieved through a public airing and trial of secret police wrongdoing.



Some of the worst abuses inflicted by former regimes were crimes under the old system but they obviously were not prosecuted. If the statute of limitation for these crimes has already elapsed by the time of the transition, can the new authorities still hold the perpetrators accountable for their deeds? In both Hungary and the Czech Republic, post-communist legislators argued that since these crimes (particularly those committed to suppress dissent in 1956 and 1968 respectively) had not been prosecuted for wholly political reasons, it was legitimate to hold that the statute of limitations had not been in effect during the earlier period. Now, freed of political obstacles to justice, the statutory period for these crimes could begin anew, enabling the new authorities to prosecute these decades-old crimes. Legislation was adopted accordingly. In both countries, the matter was put to the newly created constitutional court for review. In a fascinating pair of rulings, each court handed down a decision that eloquently addressed the need to view this question of legacy and accountability in the context of the new democracy's commitment to the rule of law.

On this basis, with plainly similar patterns - the Czech constitutional court upheld the re-running of the statute of limitations for the crimes of the old regime as a requirement of justice and the Hungarian court struck down the measure for violating the principle of the rule of law.

How widely should the net be cast in imposing sanctions on those who served the former regime? How high up the chain of command should superiors be responsible for abuses inflicted by their underlings? What standard of evidence is required to demonstrate that, rather than random events, these acts of persecution, corruption and violence were designed, or at least condoned, by those at the top? Conversely, how far down the chain should soldiers or bureaucrats be held liable for following the orders of their superiors in facilitating these abuses? In dealing with the legacy of the former East Germany, several young border guards were prosecuted in 1991 for implementing shoot-to-kill orders that produced nearly 600 deaths of East Germans attempting to escape across the border. Many criticised the first of these trials for punishing the *small fry* at the end of the chain of responsibilities, those who actually pulled the trigger, while leaving untouched the party leaders who had designed the repugnant system and given the orders (In January 1995, seven former senior East German officials were eventually charged, in a 1600-page indictment, with manslaughter and attempted manslaughter for their roles in developing and overseeing the system). In Rwanda, after ousting a regime that organised genocidal killings of at least half a million people, if the new government were to undertake prosecution of every person who participated in this heinous butchery, some 30,000 - 100,000 Rwandan citizens could be placed in the dock - a situation that would be wholly unmanageable and extremely destabilising to the transition. Moving the nation forward toward both justice and reconciliation plainly precludes an absolutist approach to the chain of responsibility.

## Truth Commissions

*Truth Commissions are bodies set up by the United Nations, governments, or nongovernmental organisations to investigate a past history of violations of human rights by the military, other government forces, or armed opposition groups. Most truth commissions are created at a point of political transition to demonstrate a break with the past, promote national reconciliation or establish the legitimacy of a new government. Truth commissions are vested with authority to access even sensitive information, but not to prosecute violators.*



*the role of truth commissions  
is to afford victims the  
opportunity to tell their  
story, from their perspective,  
thus making it a victim-  
focused, or victim-friendly  
process*

In bringing those who served the former regime to account for their actions, what kind of deeds should be scrutinised? Should prosecution be limited to egregious violations of human rights? Should they be extended to charges of corruption and economic mismanagement? In Bulgaria, for instance, several former officials were convicted because of their role in specific foreign aid decisions that contributed to the country's economic ruin.

Should there be limits on the penalties imposed in these criminal cases? Some will argue that, even in those countries in which capital punishment is used, it should not be available to transitional purge trials. Given the high emotion and political pressure inherent in these trials, they suggest that use of the death penalty will further aggravate tensions within the society.

The temptation of victims of ghastly human rights violations under the old regime to make short shrift of the criminal procedural rights of those put in the dock for the crimes of that regime - to pay them back for the abuses they inflicted - is certainly understandable. Providing yesterday's dictators and torturers with the judicial guarantees and procedural protections that they never afforded their victims maybe a source of short-term frustration during the transition, prompting cynicism of the sort expressed by an East German activist: "What we wanted was justice; what we got was the rule of law." Nonetheless, if these defendants are not afforded all the same rights granted to common defendants in a democratic order, the rule of law does not exist and the democratic foundation of the new system is arguably weakened.

In South Africa we were faced with the same dilemma. We were faced with the horror of apartheid and colonialism and the challenge to create a new order. The Truth Commission came about from an understanding that our past cannot be ignored. If we did so, it would be at our peril. To ignore the past is to perpetuate victimhood, as Alex Boraine, Deputy Chair of the SATRC reminded us in his book *A Country Unmasked*. He points to contemporary examples of countries haunted by their past - Switzerland and the Swiss bank in the Holocaust and Japan's use of comfort women during the Second World War. What form of accountability and recognition of the past should we opt for? The Truth Commission presented this country the possibility of holding in tension the need for truth telling, amnesty and reparation. The hearings held in public were a challenge to denial and the further complicity of silence that characterised the apartheid regime.

*Thirteen countries have convened 16 truth commissions to date. Nine of these commissions have been held in Africa; Uganda held the very first one in 1971 (and another in 1986). The African National Congress sponsored South Africa's first in 1992 (the Skweyiya Commission) and its second in 1993 (the Motsuenyane Commission). The third was created by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act in 1995. Despite a quarter of a century of experience, including several very successful commissions in Latin America, the idea of truth telling and amnesty rather than tribunals and convictions is still controversial. Many people - including some South Africans such as the relatives of Steve Biko, the leader of the Black Consciousness Movement who died in detention in 1977 - hold that there is a legal obligation to punish past crimes. War crimes tribunals, beginning with the German and Japanese military trials after the Second World War and more recently the UN-sponsored tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, were set up to try individuals charged with human rights crimes.*



*Successful truth commissions accomplish something quite different. They create an accurate record of a country's past, provide an honest account of its history, expose patterns of violations (the profile of a regime), and, by obtaining confessions, gain public acknowledgement of what has occurred. Whether an authoritative history of violence prevents the past from being rewritten or deters violence from recurring are open questions. Surely the hope is that official confirmation will begin to heal the wounds, that truth telling plays an important psychological role in reconciliation, that a more knowledgeable citizenry will recognise the signs and resist the return to repressive rule, and that the implementation of recommended reforms will help ensure change. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hopes to realise these and further gains - to achieve reconciliation and a sense of belonging that supersedes ethnic nationalism by creating a culture of human rights.*

*Until now, truth commissions have not paid special attention to women, as either victims or perpetrators of human rights abuses. In part this is because women's rights were not specifically defined in human rights law until 1993, when the Second World Conference on Human Rights took place in Vienna.*

**Source:** What Women Do in Wartime: Gender Conflict in Africa  
Ed. Meredith Turshen, Clotilda Twargiramanya

Martha Minow suggests that there are promising roles that a truth commission can play. Truth Commissions functions at three levels:

Personal catharsis through the talking about the terrible personal trauma;

Moral reconstruction, by producing a social judgment and moral account of the historical record, and;

Political consequences, to take action such as prosecutions or instead to desist after assessing the risks of further violence and instability.

In this view, Minow continues, the social reconstruction occurs as the commission provides an accounting of the atrocities and articulates the moral stance needed to name the horrors, and to move on. Much more important in my own view, the role of truth commissions is to afford victims the opportunity to tell their story, from their perspective, thus making it a victim-focused, or victim-friendly process. Dr. Andre Du Toit worried that the focus on victims, caregiving and forgiveness could exclude many from the TRC process. My own experiences and encounters with victims and survivors is that the many trials and inquests held during the apartheid years were unsatisfactory and that focus on the perpetrators was deeply distressing to them. In many cases the victims and survivors were not informed about the trials or inquests and were not afforded the opportunity to tell their side of the story.

Of course, regarding the TRC as a focus of therapy (so often words suggesting healing and therapy were used during the work of the TRC - I too am guilty of that) would disregard justice, politics and treat survivors and their recovery as a means towards a better society rather than as persons worthy of the dignity and entitlement of justice. Much can be said about this, but I think that another speaker will focus on this aspect of truth telling.

Truth Commissions require commitment by everyone if they are to succeed. They work best when there is political will. The alternative to a truth telling process is too awful to contemplate; continued spirals of violence based on lies, silence and collusion of deceit and the continued undermining of the dignity of those who have been wronged.



## Articles of Faith

*What does it mean for a nation to come to terms with its past? Do nations, like individuals, have psyches? Can a nation's past make a people ill as we know repressed memories sometimes make individuals ill? Conversely, can a nation or contending parts of it be reconciled to their past, as individuals can, by replacing myth with fact and lies with truth? Can we speak of nations working through a civil war or an atrocity as we speak of individuals working through a traumatic memory or event?*

These are mysterious questions and they are not made any easier to answer by the ways our metaphors lead us on. We do vest our nations with consciences, identities and memories as if they were individuals. But if it is problematic to vest an individual with a single identity, it is even more so in the case of a nation.

These are mysterious questions, but they are urgent and practical ones too. The War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague is collecting evidence about atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. It is doing so not simply because such crimes against humanity must be punished – otherwise international humanitarian law means nothing – but also because establishing the truth about such crimes through the judicial process is held to be crucial to the eventual reconciliation of the people of the Balkans. In the African city of Arusha, a similar tribunal is collecting evidence about the genocide in Rwanda, believing likewise that truth, justice and reconciliation are indissolubly linked in the rebuilding of shattered societies. In both these instances – Yugoslavia and Rwanda – the rhetoric is noble but the rationale unclear. Justice in itself is not a problematic objective, but whether the attainment of justice always contributes to reconciliation is anything but evident. Truth, too, is a good thing; but as the African proverb reminds us, *truth is not always good to say*.

In South Africa, Archbishop Tutu's Truth Commission is collecting testimony from the victims and perpetrators of apartheid. In Tutu's own words, the aim is *the promotion of national unity and reconciliation...the healing of a traumatised, divided, wounded, polarised people*. Laudable aims but are they coherent? Look at the assumptions he makes: that a nation has one psyche, not many; that the truth is one, not many; that the truth is certain, not contestable; and that when it is known by all, it has the capacity to heal and reconcile. These are not so much assumptions of epistemology as articles of faith about human nature: the truth is one and if we know it, it will make us free.

## Truth and Reconciliation Commissions - International Peace Processes

*There are, indeed, those who oppose the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Forgiveness and reconciliation are not cheap, they are costly, and it is important that that effect is registered by the opposition of these people like the Ribeiros, for instance. But you see you've also got opposition from another quarter - the quarter which says this Truth Commission is not really about reconciliation if it is going to become a witch-hunt, seeking out perpetrators. And most of those perpetrators, because of the kind of situation out of which we come, will be mainly from the white community, the Afrikaner community. And when those perpetrators come forward, or when we have victims who say the people who violated their rights are so and so and so and so, people will say that we, the Truth Commission, are engaging in an orgy of witch-hunting.*



Such articles of faith inspired the truth commissions in Chile, Argentina, Brazil that sought to find out what had happened to the thousands of innocent people killed or tortured by the military juntas during the 1960s and 1970s. All these commissions believed that if the truth were known, a people made sick by terror and lies would be made well again. In all cases, the results were ambiguous. First, as Pilate said when washing his hands, what is truth? One should distinguish between factual truth and moral truth, between narratives that tell what happened and narratives that attempt to explain why things happened and who is responsible. The truth commissions had more success in establishing the first than in promoting the second. They did succeed in establishing the facts about the disappearance, torture and death of thousands of persons and this allowed relatives and friends the consolation of knowing how the disappeared had met their fate. It says much more for the human need for truth that the relatives of victims preferred the facts to the false consolations of ignorance. It also says a great deal for the moral appeal of magnanimity that so many of them should have preferred the truth to vengeance or even justice. It was sufficient for most of them to know what happened: they did not need to punish the transgressors in order to put the past behind them.

The truth commissions closed many individual dossiers in the painful histories of their nation's past. At this molecular, individual level, they did a power of good. But they were also charged with the production of public truth and the re-making of public discourse. They were told to generate a moral narrative – explaining the genesis of evil regimes and apportioning moral responsibility for their deeds.

The military, security and police establishments were prepared to let the truth come out about individual cases of disappearance. But they fought tenaciously against prosecutions of their own people and against shouldering responsibility for their crimes. To have conceded responsibility would have weakened their legitimacy as institutions. Such was the resistance of the military in Argentina and Chile that the elected governments which had created the commissions had to choose between justice and their own survival: between prosecuting the criminals and risking a military coup, or letting them go and allowing a democratic succession to consolidate itself.

The record of the truth commissions in Latin America has disillusioned many of those who believed that shared truth was a precondition of social reconciliation. The military and police apparatus survived the inquisition with their legitimacy undermined but their power intact. The societies in question used the truth commissions to indulge in the illusion that they had put the past behind them. The truth commissions allowed exactly the kind of false reconciliation with the past they had been expressly created to forestall.

*But, quite crucially the vast majority of the people of this country want the Commission: most of the religious community - the major churches, the Jewish community, the Muslims, the Indians - have come out in support of the Commission. And those people we are talking about, the people not of high profile will be going into townships and want to be able to tell their story to the national and international community. It was very moving to be in Guguletu, for instance, and hear the mother of a boy who was one of the so-called Guguletu Seven shot by the police, saying, "I just want someone to be able to say, not as the inquest magistrate said 'no one was to blame'; I want someone to say that this was done by so and so. And this will be enough for me." She's not looking for revenge. It's an incredible and very deeply moving thing.*



The German writer and thinker Theodor Adorno observed this false reconciliation at work in his native Germany after the war:

*"Coming to terms with the past* does not imply a serious working through of the past, the breaking of its spell through an act of clear consciousness. It suggests, rather, wishing to turn the page and, if possible, wiping it from memory. The attitude that it would be proper for everything to be forgiven and forgotten by those who were wronged is expressed by the party that committed the injustice."

The dangers of this false reconciliation are real enough but it is possible that disillusion with the truth commissions of Latin America goes too far. It was never in their mandate to transform the military and security apparatus any more than it is in Archbishop Tutu's power to do the same in South Africa. Truth is truth; it is neither social nor institutional reform.

Nor is it realistic to expect that when truth is proclaimed by an official commission it is likely to be accepted by those against whom it is directed. The police and military have their truth – and its continuing hold consists precisely in the fact that it is not a tissue of lies. It is unreasonable to expect those who believed they were putting down a terrorist or insurgent threat to disown this idea simply because a truth commission exposes this threat as having been without foundation. People, especially people in uniform, do not easily or readily surrender the premises upon which their lives are based. Repentance, if it ever occurs, is an individual matter. It is too much to expect an institutional order to engage in collective repentance. All that a truth commission can achieve is to reduce the number of lies that can be circulated unchallenged in public discourse. In Argentina, its work has made it impossible to claim, for example, that the military did not throw half-dead victims into the sea from helicopters. In Chile, it is no longer permissible to assert in public that the Pinochet regime did not dispatch thousands of entirely innocent people. Truth commissions can and do change the frame of public discourse and public memory. But they cannot be judged a failure because they fail to change behaviour and institutions. That is not their function.

*The past is an argument and  
the function of truth  
commissions, like the function  
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permissible lies*

*One of my problems is going to be whether I will be able to survive listening to harrowing accounts. I laugh easily, but I cry easily as well. And I was telling my colleagues on the Commission, "I don't know... you are going to have to live with a chairperson who may break down in the course of listening to 'testimony.' You don't programme yourself, and as you listen - and especially listening to people who have sometimes been regarded as of not much consequence - you experience their dignity in the pain that they have experienced, and you hear too that they don't want revenge. And then say thank you God."*

**Source:** "Healing a Nation", Index on Censorship 5/1996 Desmond Tutu



A truth commission cannot overcome a society's divisions. It can only winnow out the solid core of facts upon which society's arguments with itself should be conducted. But it cannot bring these arguments to a conclusion. Critics of truth commissions argue as if the past were a sacred text which has been stolen and vandalised by evil men and which can be recovered and returned to a well-lit glass case in some grand public rotunda like the US Constitution or the Bill of Rights. But the past has none of the fixed and stable identity of a document. *The past is an argument and the function of truth commissions, like the function of honest historians, is simply to purify the argument, to narrow the range of permissible lies.*

Truth commissions have the greatest chance of success in societies that have already created a powerful political consensus behind reconciliation, such as in South Africa. In such a context, Tutu's commission has the chance to create a virtuous upward spiral between the disclosure of painful truth and the consolidation of the political consensus that created his commission in the first place.

In places like Yugoslavia where the parties have murdered and tortured each other for years, the prospects for truth, reconciliation and justice are much bleaker. These contexts, however bleak, are instructive because they illustrate everything that is problematic in the relation between truth and reconciliation.

The idea that reconciliation depends on shared truth presumes that shared truth about the past is possible. But truth is related to identity. What you believe to be true depends, in some measure, on who you believe yourself to be. And who you believe yourself to be is mostly defined in terms of who you are not. To be a Serb is first and foremost not to be a Croat or a Muslim. If a Serb is someone who believes Croats have a historical tendency towards fascism and a Croat is someone who believes Serbs have a penchant for genocide, then to discard these myths is to give up a defining element of their own identities.

Obviously, identity is composed of much more than negative images of the other. Many Croats and Serbs opposed these negative stereotypes and the nationalist madness that overtook their countries. There were many who fought to maintain a moral space between their personal and national identities. Yet even such people are now unable to conceive that one day Zagreb, Belgrade and Sarajevo might share a common version of the history of the conflict. Agreement on a shared chronology of events might be possible though even this would be contentious; but it is impossible to imagine the three sides ever agreeing on how to apportion responsibility and moral blame. The truth that matters to people is not factual nor narrative truth but moral or interpretive truth. And this will always be an object of dispute in the Balkans.



It is also an illusion to suppose that *impartial* or *objective* outsiders would ever succeed in getting their moral and interpretive account of the catastrophe accepted by the parties to the conflict. The very fact of being an outsider discredits rather than reinforces one's legitimacy. For there is always a truth which can only be known by those on the inside. Or if not a truth – since facts are facts – then a moral significance for these facts that only an insider can fully appreciate. The truth, if it is to be believed, must be authored by those who have suffered its consequences.

The problem of a shared truth is also that it does not lie *in between*. It is not a compromise between two competing versions. Either the siege of Sarajevo was a deliberate attempt to terrorise and subvert a legitimately elected government of an internationally recognised state, or it was legitimate pre-emptive defence by the Serbs of their homeland from Muslim attack. It cannot be both. Outside attempts to write a version of the truth which does *justice* to the truth held by both sides are unlikely to be credible to either.

Nor is an acknowledgement of shared suffering equivalent to shared truth. It is relatively easy for both sides to acknowledge each other's pain.

Much more difficult, usually impossible in fact, is shared acknowledgement of who bears the lion's share of responsibility.

Atrocity myths about the other side are an important part of the identities in question. Hill-country Serbs in the Foca region of Bosnia told British journalists in the summer of 1992 that their ethnic militias were obliged to cleanse the area of Muslims because it was a well-known fact that Muslims crucified Serbian children and floated their bodies down the river past Serbian settlements. Since such myths do not need factual corroboration in order to reproduce themselves, they are not likely to be dispelled by the patient assembly of evidence to the contrary. This particular atrocity myth used to be spread about the Jews in medieval times. The myth was not true about the Jews and it is not true about Muslims, but that is not the point. The point is that myth is strangely impervious to facts.

Aggressors have their own defence against truth, but so do victims. Peoples who believe themselves to be victims of aggression have an understandable incapacity to believe that they also committed atrocities. Myths of innocence and victim hood are a powerful obstacle in the way of confronting unwelcome facts.

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But nations are not like individuals: they do not have a single identity, conscience or responsibility. National identity is a site of conflict and argument, not a silent shrine for collective worship. Even authoritarian populist democracies like Serbia and Croatia never *speak* with one voice or remember the past with a single memory.



The essential function of justice in the dialogue between truth and reconciliation is to disaggregate individual and nation; to disassemble the fiction that nations are responsible like individuals for the crimes committed in their name.

The most important function of war crimes trials is to *individualise* guilt, to relocate it from the collectivity to the individuals responsible. As Karl Jaspers said of the Nuremberg trial in 1946. *For us Germans this trial has the advantage that it distinguishes between the particular crimes of the leaders and that it does not condemn the Germans collectively.*

By analogy with Nuremberg, therefore, The Hague trials are not supposed to put the Serbian, Muslim or Croatian peoples in the dock but to separate the criminals from the nation and to lay the guilt where it belongs, on the shoulders of individuals. Yet trials inevitably fail to apportion all the guilt to all those responsible. Small fry pay the price for the crimes of the big fish and this reinforces the sense that justice is not definitive but arbitrary. Nor do such trials break the link between individual and nation. Nuremberg failed to do this: the rest of the world still holds the Germans responsible collectively and the Germans themselves still accept this responsibility. The most that can be said is that war crimes trials do something to unburden a people of the fiction of collective guilt, by helping them to transform guilt into shame. This appears to have happened in Germany. The German novelist Martin Walser once wrote that when a Frenchman or an American sees pictures of Auschwitz, *he doesn't have to think: we human beings! He can think: those Germans! Can we think: those Nazis! I for one cannot...* This is to say that most West Germans accept the same version of the truth about their past; they take responsibility for it in the sense that they believe it was shameful; and to this degree, therefore, believe the past will not return.

Again, however, it is not clear that Nuremberg itself accomplished this transformation of German attitudes. As Ian Buruma has pointed out in *The Wages of Guilt*, many Germans dismissed the Nuremberg trials as nothing more than *victor's justice*. It was not Nuremberg but the strictly German war crimes trials of the 1960s that forced Germans to confront their part in the Holocaust. Verdicts reached in a German courtroom benefited from a legitimacy the Nuremberg process never enjoyed.

Nor was coming to terms with the past confined to war crimes trials. It was an accumulation of a million school visits to concentration camps, a thousand books, the Hollywood television series *Holocaust* – a vast molecular reckoning between generations that is still going on.






When it comes to healing, one is faced with the most mysterious process of all. For what seems apparent in the former Yugoslavia, in Rwanda and in South Africa is that the past continues to torment because it is *not* past. These places are not living in a serial order of time, but in a simultaneous one, in which the past and present are a continuous, agglutinated mass of fantasies, distortions, myths and lies. Reporters in the Balkan wars often reported that when they were told atrocity stories they were occasionally uncertain whether these stories had occurred yesterday or in 1941 or 1841 or 1441. For the tellers of the tale, yesterday and today were the same. When Joyce had Stephen Daedalus say, in the opening pages of *Ulysses*, that the past was a nightmare from which the Irish people were struggling to awake, this is what he meant: as in nightmare, time past and time present were indistinguishable. This, it should be added, is the dream-time of vengeance. Crimes can never be safely fixed in the historical past; they remain locked in the eternal present, crying out for vengeance. Joyce saw that in the identities of both Irish Nationalism and Ulster Protestantism, the past was never safely past; its bodies were never safely buried; they were always roaming through the sleep of the living, calling out for retribution. What is mythic – and hence what is poisonous – about the past in societies torn apart by civil war or racial conflict is that it is not past at all.

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It is perilous to extrapolate from traumatised individuals to whole societies. It is simply an extravagant metaphor to think of societies coming awake from nightmare. The only coming awake that makes sense to speak of is one by one, individual by individual, in the recesses of their own identities. Nations, properly speaking, cannot be reconciled to other nations, only individuals to individuals. Nonetheless, individuals can be helped to heal and to reconcile by public rituals of atonement. When Chilean President Patricio Alwyn appeared on television to apologise to the victims of Pinochet's repression, he created the public climate in which a thousand acts of private repentance and apology became possible. He also symbolically cleansed the Chilean state of its association with these crimes. German Chancellor Willy Brandt's gesture of going down on his knees at a death camp had a similarly cathartic effect by officially associating the German state with the process of atonement. These acts compare strikingly with the behaviour of the political figures responsible for the war in the Balkans. If, instead of writing books niggling at the numbers exterminated at Jasenovac, President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia had gone to the site of the most notorious of the Croatian extermination camps and publicly apologised for the crimes committed by the Croatian *Ustashe* against Serbs, gypsies, Jews and partisans, he would have liberated the Croatian present from the hold of the *Ustashe* past. He would also have increased dramatically the chances of the Serbian minority accepting the legitimacy of an independent Croatian state. Had he lanced the boil of the past, the war of 1991 might not have occurred. He chose not to, of course, because he believed Serbs as guilty of crimes against the Croats. But sometimes, a gesture of atonement is effective precisely because it rises above the crimes done to your own side.

Societies and nations are not like individuals, but the individuals who have political authority within societies can have an enormous impact on the mysterious process by which individuals come to term with the painfulness of their society's past.

The experience of the war in Yugoslavia makes it difficult to conceive of reconciliation, if it were ever possible, in terms of those clichés – *forgiving and forgetting, turning the page, putting the past behind us* and so on. The intractable ferocity and scale of the war shows up the hollowness of these clichés for what they are. But reconciliation might eventually be founded on something starker: the democracy of the dead, the equality of all victims, the drastic nullity of all struggles that end in killing and the demonstrable futility of avenging the past in the present.

**Michael Ignatieff**

**Source:** An abridged version of article from Index on Censorship 5, 1996.

## Women in Social Movements

*Rapporteur*

Gila Svirsky, Jerusalem

The Palestinian and Israeli participants opened with a presentation of a movement of women who are reaching across borders to end the war and violence in their region. Then participants shared their experience of women's movements to end sexual violence in India, give support to victims of the atomic bombs in Japan, advocate for legislation to protect children survivors in Chernobyl, work as members of Parliament in Malawi, address the needs of sex workers in Thailand, help survivors of the wars in Southeast Asia, and many other examples.

One key question that arose concerned the participation of women in government. Will such activism help bring about change or, as poet Audre Lorde said, will *the master's tools dismantle the master's house*? There was consensus, however, about the need for women's solidarity – everywhere, including Parliament, when women do hold these positions.

Women from almost everywhere expressed the marginalisation of women in their societies, with the exception of participants from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific. These women described their culture in which the voices of the women elders prevail. It was an encouraging voice on which to end the roundtable.

## Women in Black: An International Movement of Women for Peace

### The Origins

The international movement of Women in Black began in Jerusalem in January 1988, one month after the Palestinian *intifada* [national uprising] broke out. The movement began as a small group of women from Jerusalem who decided to carry out a very simple form of protest: Once a week at the same hour and in the same location – a major traffic intersection – they donned black clothing and raised a black sign in the shape of a hand that said *Stop the Occupation*.

There was no exclamation point, as in *Stop the Occupation!*, and no other visible message. But the black clothes of mourning and the grim look of the women said it all: The occupation by Israel of the Palestinian territories must come to an end, and we will stand here until it does.

The movement began in Jerusalem, but spread quickly and spontaneously to other locations in Israel. It was a simple form of protest, and women could do it quite easily. They didn't have to get to the big city, they could bring their children with them, there was no chanting or marching, and the medium was the message. Within a few months, women were standing in 40 different locations throughout Israel.



## Reflections

*The World Court of Women, and everything leading up to it, was an extraordinary experience. The day of the Court itself was a shocking confrontation with the intense violence directed against innocent people, women in particular, throughout the world. Although much of this information was known, the weight of the testimonies from woman after woman put faces on the suffering.*

*The counterpoint to these terrible stories came in the efforts made by women to channel this pain into positive, life-nurturing activities. These moments provided hope in an otherwise dark story of despair.*

*For me as an Israeli woman who has participated in the Women in Black vigils from the third week of their birth in Israel over 13 years ago, one of the most moving moments of the World Court events was the mass vigil of Women in Black held late Wednesday afternoon, March 7. There were perhaps thousands of women dressed in black filling up the road beside the Civic Centre in Cape Town and holding signs with every imaginable demand for justice in a world that victimises women, the poor, people of colour, and other groups that those in power marginalise and disenfranchise. Slogans ran the gamut from "Stop Abuse of Women", "Say No to Fundamentalism", "End Exploitation by the IMF and World Bank" to a few "End Israeli Occupation of Palestine" and many other causes. The spirit was high, almost exhilarating at this vigil, and many women sang and danced as they held their signs in what could conceivably have been a silent vigil, but for this being held in South Africa.*

*In workshops, we had an opportunity to hear stories from women on the front lines in their own countries, working for improved conditions. In the Women in Social Movements workshop, which I co-facilitated with my Palestinian sister, we heard from women who support victims of atomic bombs in Japan, advocate for legal protection for Chernobyl survivors, address the needs of sex workers in Thailand, and many other causes. As a peace worker in Israel, I learnt of strategies that will come in useful for my own work.*

*Although I support an end to Israeli oppression of Palestinians in my region, some Palestinian delegates to the conference sought to silence my words as an Israeli, in disregard of my politics, which are critical of my government's policies. Thanks to the diplomatic efforts of the conference organisers, I was able to present my views, and I hope they contributed to an understanding that not all Israelis support the actions or policies of our government, but many of us support peace with justice.*

*Thank you to the organisers for their hard work in organising and conducting a very complex conference. It was beautifully run, and I believe could only serve to open the hearts and minds of all those who attended.*

Gila Svirsky, Women in Black, Jerusalem

*Two or three months after the first Women in Black vigil in Israel, we began to hear of solidarity vigils in other countries: women dressed in black who carried signs shaped like the stylized hands we used in Israel that bore similar slogans. Initial reports came from Canada and the United States, and these later spread to Europe and Australia.*

*Some of these early solidarity vigils of Women in Black were composed of Jewish and Palestinian women. The first San Francisco vigil was one such group, and they carried signs saying **Palestinian and Jewish Women United** in addition to the slogans **End the Occupation** and **2 Peoples, 2 States**.*

*But most of these early Women in Black vigils in North America were composed of Jewish women. Soon, we began to receive newsletters from a North American coalition of these vigils called the Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation (JWCEO). This coalition was founded in New York city in April 1988 — just four months after our first vigil in Israel — in solidarity with Women in Black and other Israeli and Palestinian women's groups working for peace. The emphasis here was on Jewish, meaning we're still loyal Jews and love Israel, but we want to end the occupation. The JWCEO newsletter carried a full description of our vigils and conferences in Israel, as well as news of peace activities throughout North America. It called upon the North American Jewish community to publicly support Israelis working for peace, and particularly to show solidarity with the Women in Black vigils in Israel.*



The JWCEO newsletter from October 1990 also carried the names and addresses of 26 affiliate groups and organizations, from Seattle to New Haven, all Jewish women's peace activity focused on ending the occupation. Some called themselves *Women in Black* (in Berkeley, Boston, Boulder, Palo Alto, and Syracuse, to name a few) and held a regular vigil, though not weekly in all places. And others assumed different names, formats, and strategies: *Jews for a Just Peace* in Toronto, *Hannah Arendt Lesbian Peace Patrol* in Minneapolis, and *Ithaca Jewish Women to End the Occupation*. The common denominator was of women wanting to end the Israeli occupation.

JWCEO was in close contact with many Israeli *Women in Black*, and information was shared and networked. Visits went in both directions, and sometimes *Women in Black* and other Israeli peace organizations also received donations to help with specific projects. But beyond the material help, these groups provided a much needed source of emotional nourishment to us. I'll never forget the amazement and pride I felt the first time I looked at a JWCEO newsletter and saw pictures of *Women in Black* vigils in a host of North American cities. Until that moment, I had never quite appreciated the fact that our vigil was not an isolated Israeli phenomenon, but even admired and emulated. And in a remarkable expression of international sisterhood, over 24 organizations held solidarity vigils in various locations in Europe, North and South America to celebrate International Women's Day in March 1990. This was an initiative of several *Women in Black* from Jerusalem.

Simultaneously, *Women in Black* began to flower in many large European cities, with slightly different emphasis in each location. Some vigils were primarily Jewish, while in other cities (Amsterdam, Brussels, London, Melbourne, Sydney, etc.), the groups were also mixed Jewish and Palestinian. These latter vigils had to struggle to dialogue and find a common language, as they sought a way to express their common belief in peace and coexistence in the Middle East.

At some point in the proliferation of *Women in Black* vigils in other countries, an unfortunate phenomenon developed: the appearance of groups who were motivated by anti-Israeli attitudes that might also be linked with anti-Semitism. This is both the paranoia and the well-founded fear of every Jew: that criticism of Israel will awaken the slumbering anti-Semitic beast in some people. This is a source of much anxiety about being critical of Israel to outsiders [= non-Jews]. Once in a while, a media report would come to our attention of a vigil in some distant location in which the already grave sins of Israel were expanded into deeds of mass murder on the scale of Nazi Germany. It was hard to dissociate *Women in Black* in Israel from these negative phenomena when they arose, but there was nothing we could do to prevent them. And we could not let them stop us from expressing our own criticism, which was about real sins and came from a place of caring deeply about Israel.



## A Life of Their Own

At some point, *Women in Black* vigils took off with a life of their own. They were now forming in a variety of countries, and many of these had nothing to do with the Israeli occupation. In Italy, *Women in Black* vigils took place in 80 locations during the Gulf War period to protest a range of issues, from the Israeli occupation to the violence of the Mafia and other organised crime. Italian *Women in Black* were the first in Europe, and helped spread the phenomenon to other countries, in addition to their ongoing support for the movement in Israel. In Germany, the original protest of *Women in Black* seems to have been against the sale of chemicals by German firms to the Iraqi regime. After the war, German *Women in Black* broadened their mandate to protest a variety of social ills: neo-Nazism, xenophobia, racism against migrant workers, nuclear arms, and other issues, through vigils in Munich, Cologne, Berlin, Wiesbaden, and elsewhere. *Women in Black* in Belgrade and Zagreb set out to stop the war, end the mass rape of women, and eliminate ethnic strife. These women in the former Yugoslavian republics set a stunning example of inter-ethnic cooperation among themselves that could only be an inspiration to their countrywomen and men.

*Women in Black* then took off in Asia, first in India and then in the Philippines. It began in 1994 with women in the city of Bangalore who protested the razing of a mosque in Ayodhya, which became a metaphor for violent Hindu nationalism, and the communal conflicts that spread as a result. Indian *Women in Black* hold a weekly vigil that calls for an end to the ill treatment of women by religious fundamentalists. These women from the Asian Women's Human Rights Council are cognizant of the many forms of violence that this vigil has been used to protest:

*We are the Women in Black...Everywhere women are breaking the silence, women are naming the violence. Women making public the many forms of "personal" violence against women - wife battering, female circumcision, pornography, sexual assault, rape, dowry burning. Everywhere, women, unmasking the many horrific faces of more public "legitimate" forms of violence - state repression, communalism, ethnic cleansing, nationalism, wars...Violence in the name of development, in the name of reproductive technologies, genetic engineering, and the feminisation of poverty.*

In the early years, most of these vigils had some sense of the existence of each other, understanding that they were part of a worldwide movement of women seeking to end war and violence. In the newsletter written in Israel that went out to readers in 19 countries, we tried to strengthen this bond, encouraging women to describe their work in far-flung corners of the globe. But over the years, vigils sprang up all over the world, and soon the origins and herstory of the movement were forgotten. One Israeli woman reported a visit to San Francisco in which she stumbled across a *Woman in Black* vigil protesting the neglect of the homeless in their city. (This was the second generation of *Women in Black*, after the first Jewish-Palestinian group had folded.) I'm from *Women in Black* in Jerusalem, she told them excitedly, perhaps hoping for a little matriarchal respect. They had never heard of us.



*Women in Black vigils sprang up in many parts of the world. Australian women held **Thursdays in Black**, organized by university feminist organizations to protest domestic violence. One Australian parliament member wore black on Thursdays to express solidarity with the movement. The American Friends Service Committee in Connecticut and Massachusetts organized a campaign to **Wear Black on Monday for Peace**. Thursdays were also Black in Seattle, Washington, where a vigil sought to **send positive thoughts** to anyone caught in armed conflict, including those living in violence-ridden neighborhoods. Women in Black vigils against the Israeli occupation continue to this day in several locations, including New York city.*

*There is no complete listing of Women in Black vigils throughout the world, but I do want to mention the ones that I have heard about, or who were in touch with us through the newsletter. Some of these had long-standing vigils — some still exist — and others had brief bursts of vigiling, then continued in other formats. They include:*

Aachen, Germany	Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.
Albany, New York, U.S.	Montpelier, Vermont, U.S.
Albi, France	Munich, Germany
Amsterdam, Netherlands	New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.
Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.	New Paltz, New York, U.S.
Bangalore, India	New York, New York, U.S.
Bangkok, Thailand	Nuremberg, Germany
Belgrade, Serbia	Palo Alto, California, U.S.
Berkeley, California, U.S.	Pancevo, Serbia
Berlin, Germany	Philadelphia, PA, U.S.
Bologna, Italy	Rome, Italy
Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.	St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.
Boulder, Colorado, U.S.	San Francisco, California, U.S.
Brattleboro, Vermont, U.S.	Seattle, Washington, U.S.
Brussels, Belgium	Sophia, Bulgaria
Burlington, Vermont, U.S.	Sydney, Australia
Cologne, Germany	Syracuse, New York, U.S.
Colombo, Sri Lanka	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Dallas, Texas, U.S.	Turin, Italy
Eugene, Oregon, U.S.	Venice, California, U.S.
Ithaca, New York, U.S.	Venice, Italy
London, U.K.	Verona, Italy
Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.	Washington, D.C., U.S.
Manila, Philippines	Wiesbaden, Germany
Melbourne, Australia	Zagreb, Croatia
Milan, Italy	Zurich, Switzerland

*In short, there have been Women in Black from Aachen to Zurich, and there may be more. Women in Black has turned into a movement of groups of women in many countries who hold vigils to protest violence in their part of the world: war, inter-ethnic conflict, militarism, the arms industry, racism, neo-Nazism, violence against women, violence in the neighborhoods, etc. Each vigil is autonomous, setting its own policy and guidelines, though in all the vigils the women dress in black, symbolizing the tragedy of the victims of violence. What unites us all is our commitment to a world free of violence.*



*Thus, it was not at all surprising that on September 4, 1995 in Huairou, China, about 45 minutes outside of Beijing, over 3,000 women from different parts of the world gathered in the evening for a mass vigil, the culmination of a day devoted to analysis of peace and militarism in the world. This gathering of peace activists, organized by the Women in Black of Bangalore, was one of the most moving events of the Beijing Conference on Women, according to many participants of this mass event that brought together 40,000 women activists from all parts of the world. At the vigil in China, the women carried banners, placards, and posters in a babel of languages, as well as lamps from their own cultures — lanterns, diyas, lamperas, shammias, and candles. The evening lit up with their hopes and their words, demanding an end to violence and aggression wherever it exists.*

*It was a Women in Black vigil, one of thousands that has been held in cities throughout the world, from Taipei to Dallas, and many points of Europe and Asia in between. This was now an international movement, and inspiring a new generation of women.*

### **An International Sisterhood for Peace**

*The founding mothers of Women in Black in Jerusalem — all political veterans - knew of the grand history of women's peace movements internationally, but most of the rest of us were unaware of this before we began our vigil. At some point during our growing politicisation and raised awareness, we gradually came to realise that Women in Black was part of a sisterhood that was generations old and scattered far and wide. And then we realized that Women in Black were not only a source of inspiration for women's peace work all over the world, but that we were one link in the chain of this proud history.*

*The most obvious foremother of Women in Black is the Black Sash movement of South Africa<sup>2</sup> These are white women who fought apartheid in their country, just as we were Jews fighting the occupation by our own government. As their name suggests, the trademark of these women was the black sash that they wore over their clothes to signal their protest at the racist system. And, not surprisingly, they, like us, were mostly the white middle class, who were not the most obvious victims of the injustice (although we are all, one way or another, the victims of all acts of injustice).*

*But the Black Sash movement was only one among many. We also learned of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina who protest the brutal political killings and kidnappings; the Greenham Common Women in England against nuclear warfare; the anti-war work of the Italian Women's Association for Peace and the much heralded Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; the Mothers of Soldiers Committee in Russia, to bring the boys home from Chechnya; and the five organizations, besides Women in Black, that sprang from the horrors in the former Yugoslavia — the Autonomous Women's House, the Center for Women War Victims, the Anti-War Campaign, Women Against the War, and the Movement of Sarajevo Women. I am typical of the hundreds of Israeli Women in Black who knew nothing of these organizations until our own involvement and education by the veteran women peace activists in Israel. This is another debt that we acknowledge to them, with deep appreciation. And learning of the existence of this movement for peace by women only strengthened our own resolve and empowered us.*

*A conference held in Paris in April 1994 called Mothers in Struggle<sup>3</sup> paid tribute to some of these organisations, and Women in Black was one of many groups there. At our own international women's peace conference in Jerusalem in late 1994, there were representatives of women's peace organisations from 23 countries.*

*This great sisterhood of organisations is today a formidable network of support and assistance to one another. Perhaps this is best expressed by the Belgrade Women in Black in their New Year's message (December 1993) to the international women's peace movement:*

*We declare: Women's solidarity does not recognize borders. Women's solidarity is a reality and not an empty word. Solidarity of the women's and peace movement in Europe and elsewhere has helped us overcome moments of deepest despair.*

*Thanks to this solidarity we manage to help women and other victims of war. The network of women's solidarity against the war and the creation of numerous support groups fills us with the most sincere tenderness.*

*It is far beyond my expertise to discuss the international movement of women for peace, but I feel privileged that my activism as a Woman in Black brought me in touch with a small corner of that powerful global experience.*

### ***Gila Svirsky***

Gila Svirsky is one of the founding mothers of the Women in Black Movement, Israel. This is an unpublished manuscript and is adapted from: *Standing for Peace: The Story of Women in Black in Israel*.

### **References:**

1. Asian Women's Human Rights Council, *Women in Black: A Gathering of Spirit*, AWHRC, P.O. Box 190, 1099 Manila, Philippines.
2. See Kathryn Spink, *Black Sash*, London: Methuen, 1991.
3. Allow me to note respectfully that many women who are not mothers are part of the struggle.



## Reconciling Memories of War

*Rapporteur*

*Aruna Gnanadason, Geneva/India*

In this roundtable on reconciling memories, we talked about Indonesia, South Africa, Japan and Serbia along with our stories of women from Afghanistan, India and the US. We spoke of the silence in our histories, of the need to help women to break that silence.

We spoke of the women who were silenced, the comfort women who were silenced for 50 years and wondered whether we have to wait that long. We said never again will we allow women to be silenced. We spoke of the need to be suspicious of the ways in which our histories are written and the interpretation of those histories that don't include the stories of women, and we affirmed our commitment to document stories of women and to write our lives into our histories.

We spoke of the subjugation and conquests of women's bodies and spirit through wars and conflicts, of our responsibility to accompany and care for victims, and of nurturing them into speech.

We spoke of the danger of the *competition of traumas*, of weighing whose story is the most painful. We reminded ourselves that women in victimising communities could themselves be victims at other times. We cautioned ourselves against the dangers of commodifying and commercialising our histories and our stories, of overburdening the victims for our own political ends.

We spoke of the daily wars women live with. The wars of domestic violence, wars against Dalit women in India, against women in Afghanistan, against indigenous communities, wars that seem to continue without end. We affirmed the need to develop alternatives to the painful ways our histories are dealt with by conventional legal systems and international courts.

We would like to work for reconciling peace with restorative justice. We spoke of women having to be at the centre of reconciliation processes, of claiming our legitimate space in negotiation tables. We affirmed the role of Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa but recognised it as a state sponsored process that needs to be followed up with community processes, where all sections of the society will engage in dialogue, truth telling and healing. We affirmed the need for such processes not only in South Africa but also in all parts of the world. We cautioned against the use of Truth and Reconciliation Commission process as a model that could be transplanted into other contexts.

We spoke of the need to work with children, to teach children the power of justice and peace, to teach children that toy weapons could lead to real weapons. We spoke of our solidarity of resistance, of struggle, of hope and laughter and of giving birth to alternative history of genuine justice with genuine peace.

## Healing and Peace Building in Local Communities

*Rapporteur*

*Menuna Zvizdic, Bosnia*

*In our discussion, we focused on psychosocial, rational and spiritual programs of peace building and recognised them as central aspects of any initiative for peace building.*

Peace building processes vary from culture to culture, but one common thread that we felt is necessary for success is local access to traditional methods of conflict solving. This also includes the formation of women's and other local groups striving for peace.

Participants were representatives of organisations committed to peace building from the South African Republic, Peru, Israel, Burundi, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

We started with specific samples from the areas of reconciliation, demilitarisation, healing and a fresh building of human relationships that recognises race, ethnicity, region, class, religion, nationality and age, because all of these contribute to people's individual responses to each other. We tried to document various ways and methods that have been used in peace building. We described and analysed some examples of peace building within the governmental institutions and grass-roots organisations in local communities in order to make differences.

Experiences and responses to conflict vary greatly. Various strategies have been used, but a few issues are common: reconciliation, demilitarisation, fresh building of interpersonal relations as well as the importance of women's roles in healing. Finding ways to link the material, social and spiritual demands of life is necessary in order to fulfill the true meaning of peace.

A basic condition needed to create peace is a concern for survival. Children and women have been primary victims of indirect and structural violence and war. Religious and secular groups should work on equal ground. Churches were often a suitable space for mediation and reaffirming a commitment to peace.

Churches are also often linked with a local community, and they understand the human price of conflict because they have more sources and individual contacts than local NGOs. Quakers, for example promote activities of indulgence and reconciliation and at the same time they diminish patriarchal behaviour, which many religions create or condone.

*Reconciliation* means uniting former enemies; namely it is learning to coexist in peace and reduce hostility through a traditional meeting of civilians, armies, politicians and diplomats. It was important to work on the humanisation of conflict by bringing a victim into focus, reducing tension between various ethnic groups, and encouraging local people to take an active role in conflict prevention. We created groups of women and men who worked on conflict resolutions through common goals in order to empower reconciliation.



## Reflections

*The World Court of Women was an opportunity and inspiration for sharing information about activism for peace and justice. Women's experiences are a base for a wider, multidimensional approach to the new generation of women's human rights.*

*This Court highlighted women's power and questions the context and regaining consciousness of their differences; it becomes a guide for possible metamorphosis in power relations to women's advantage, and in the same way gives propositions for the oppressed ones.*

*The Court inspired us to think of ourselves as powerful instead of the helpless victims that culture tells us we should be. It helps us, as women, stand strong and confident in our own abilities and be aware of our true social identities.*

*We heard 40 testimonies from different regions of the world, full of pain and power and survival; stories from different cultures, where women talked about personal visibility and invisibility, humiliation, pain, and where they pointed to personal silences, personal orientations and life projects.*

*It is time to build new political spaces, and this has already begun in Cape Town where we considered and analysed the different forms of violence and wars.*

*The activities around the Court helped promote reconciliation and stressed the importance of resisting male dominance in the unfair structures of families and societies.*

*The participants used the Court as a space in which to analyse the experiences and emotions shared through the discussions and testimonies and somehow try to heal the wounds without forgetting the pain.*

*The Court of Women against War, for Peace was a strong tool for widening communities, creating local-global connections, reaffirming solidarity, and extending canals of information.*

*The Court made me aware of the importance of sharing our stories of pain and violation, of understanding our history and of formulating personal views of our future based on what those stories taught us.*

*That is the voice of women for peace.*

*Women's voices can and will create political processes focused on peace instead of war; we can and will strengthen social justice and our control over our own lives. The political is personal. Women are curious about their crucial role in peace building, and it is important to support them in all of their complex roles so that we can finally end the violence in our time.*

Mennuna Zvizdic, Zene Zenama, Bosnia

Since many methods of conflict resolution reject gender-based suffering many women peace activists did not wait for the National Commissions to create a reconciliation process but they immediately started processes of reconciliation within their own local communities.

*Demilitarisation* is a process where individuals, groups, social, economic or political systems stop relying or rely less on the army. Effects of militarisation are the following: increase of domestic violence and violence against women and children, militarisation of children's toys and plays, reintegration of ex-fighters, especially children soldiers.

To prevent militarisation and promote peace means to analyse and document violence in all societies, to actively work to reduce the production and distribution of armaments, and to protest against forced mobilisation of sons, husbands and brothers.

Peace building is a natural and traditional activity of women due to their ability to create and nurture life. Women educate men on facilitating mediations; women work on all levels and they are real fighters for peace. We considered that a number of women ought to be instruments for peace creation, and they need to take an active part in decision-making for the community. It is also important to work on local people's empowerment in order to achieve and maintain peace, and to teach violence prevention in our own communities and families – both in the countries and the world. Peace activists cross limits of peace building and post-conflict situations.

Peace campaigns are focused on peace talks and reconciliation through dialogue of adaptation and inclusion. Common gatherings mean human relations and processes where individual and creative expressions are shared and through which strategies are created and plans are defined as potential goals for leading activities against violence and militarism. Talking about our own experiences, we helped the others better understand the themes.

When I was talking about my own work with women from my community, I wanted to talk about women as creators of peace. Through sharing our experiences, we enriched each other's work, regardless of geographic distance. We made friendships, strengthened and shared visions of peace instead of violence and war.

Participants were sources for each other by sharing their experiences, feelings and analyses. We tried to put our differences aside and talk about the subjects that connect us. We discussed our feelings, tensions, pains, fears and how to start healing.

All our approaches are very personal, creative and political. Pragmatism and deep belief are united in action.

Networking is also an important activity, especially for women's groups, even across state borders. A lot of groups that deal with peace building use traditional methods for conflict resolution and governance. Traditional methods needn't be neglected; rather they should be included in methods of peace building. Women preserve different aspects of culture, therefore they have an important position within local forces to maintain peace in their societies. We collected and shared the information that supports reconciliation.

We talked of traditional and modern civil structures that are looking for non-violent methods in conflict resolutions with an overall goal to create access to peace education for communities, which they so badly need.

The role of the youth in peace building was especially stressed. We have tried to lay the foundation for equal access to correct information concerning the consequences of war, and we hope to strengthen our peace building abilities by including gender issues as essential components to any peace programme.



## From Karayuki-san to comfort woman

*The comfort women system that the Japanese Imperial forces established originally in China in the early 1930s quickly expanded to almost every corner of the Asia-Pacific region following the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. It became the largest and most elaborate system of trafficking in women in the history of mankind, and one of the most brutal.*

*The scale of the operation was unprecedented in several ways: the number of women involved, the international scope of the operation, the scale of the military organised system required for procuring women, the length of time over which the system operated, and the geographical breadth of Japan's wartime empire wherein the system was administered.*

## Comfort Women: Wartime Sexual Slavery and Women's Visions of Peace

*Rapporteur*

*Nelia Sancho, Philippines*

*This roundtable looked at the impact that the wars of the last century have had on women, particularly the experiences of Asian women in the Second World War of Japanese military sexual slavery. The participants heard the testimonies of three former comfort women survivors called *Lolas* from the Philippines, who also told their stories through visual images patched and sewn in quilts made individually by each survivor. The roundtable participants noted the transformation of the *Lolas* into articulate and self-confident women capable of articulating visions of peace for themselves and their communities. They shared their strong presence at the forefront of the national and international campaign for legal redress and for justice. While each survivor had to deal with their trauma from their experiences of rape and sex slavery perpetrated by the Japanese imperial forces, they also sought to create positive change in themselves and the people and communities around them, including their own families.*

The coming out publicly of a number of former comfort women survivors (from 300 - 1,000 women) from various countries of Asia in the last ten years, in order to let the world know of their experience and their demand for legal redress, was seen as the most dramatic and profound effect of the national and international campaign for justice and human rights of the affected persons. Atty. Chin Feng Wang of Taiwan, who has worked with former comfort victims from Taiwan, called *amahs*, shared their stories of pain, but also of newfound strength and self-power. A video film entitled *The Taiwan Comfort Women Story* was made available to the participants. Nelia Sancho of the Philippines shared her work of ten years with the AWHRC (Asian Women Human Rights Council), which pioneered the research and conducted intensive support work for the Filipino ex-comfort women *Lolas*. Nelia undertook the organising of two survivors' organisation in the Philippines, the *Lila Pilipina* (May 1994) and the latest group called the *Lolas Kampanyera* (November 2000).

Artist Andrew Ward who created the Lines of Violation (LOV), an art installation based on the hand drawings of survivors from the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan, shared his reflections on the theme of war and violence against women. He sees the need for all the participants of the roundtable and the World Court of Women to work out the said theme as it touches their inner selves.

The participants of the roundtable discussion affirmed the following:

1. That the coming out to speak in public of their experience as former comfort women – survivors of rape and sexual slavery – is a triumph against pain and adversity which showed their courage and integrity as well as their will and determination to struggle against oppression and injustice. It was an inspiration for all the participants to listen to the former comfort women's dreams and visions to create a world of peace, equality, humanity and a caring community by starting with their own selves and the community around them. The Lolas of the Philippines, for example, do try to dream and live their lives today at the highest levels possible.
2. That by their testimonies, their tireless commitment and campaign for justice, and their personal examples of survival, resistance and personal triumph over pain and adversity, the former comfort women of Asia are beacons of light in the wilderness of violence against women.
3. And finally, the roundtable reaffirmed the World Court of Women, as conceived by AWHRC, El Taller, the South African women and other co-sponsoring organisations, as a beacon of strength and resistance, and of efforts at forging alternative spaces and possibilities, as well as alternative ways of life experiences being built and waged by women in partnership with the community around them.

*But this was not the first time that Japan had engaged in widespread trafficking in women in the Asia-Pacific region for the purpose of sexual exploitation. From the final years of the Tokugawa regime in the mid-nineteenth century, the authority of the Shogunate over daimyo (feudal lords), then in decline, finally collapsed over the long-standing policy of national isolation. This was due to the increasing number of foreign ships that visited Japanese ports and the pressure to open up the country for trade. It was around this time that young women began to be smuggled out of Japan and sold to brothels in neighbouring countries, in particular China and the east coast of Russia. These women were called karayuki-san, which literally means a person travelling to China.. Originally coined by the people of northern Kyushu to refer to those who sought work overseas, the term came to be applied specifically to the impoverished rural women sold into prostitution far from home.*

*Shortly after the Meiji Restoration - the establishment of the modern Japanese state in 1868 - the number of karayuki-san increased rapidly. Within the following few decades, their destinations included various parts of Southeast Asia, India, Australia, Hawaii, the east coast of the US, and even as far as Cape Town in South Africa. However, the major business centres for this Japanese sex industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were Vladivostok, Shanghai, and Singapore.<sup>1</sup>*



.....it seems that the foreign currencies that these Japanese brothel keepers and traders (as well as some karayuki-san) saved and sent back to their homes in Japan played an important role in developing Japan's modern economy. For example, it is said that of a total of one million yen that Japanese residents in Vladivostok remitted home to Japan in 1900, 630,000 yen was from earnings in the sex industry.<sup>2</sup> The acquisition of foreign currency was one of the most urgent tasks for the new Meiji regime in order to lay the foundations of its capitalism. In early Meiji, apart from a few semi-processed manufactured goods, such as silk yarn, Japan did not have many export staples to aid the speedy accumulation of foreign money. Many contemporaries in the early Meiji era were aware of the indispensable contribution of Japan's overseas sex industry to securing foreign currency. For example, the philosopher and educator Fukuzawa Yukichi - who promoted Western ideas of individualism, equality between men and women, and national independence - argued against some of the domestic criticism of Japan's large-scale overseas prostitution business. In January 1896 he wrote:

*In human society prostitutes are necessary.... As the work by women away from home necessarily follows the migration of people, it would be wise to openly permit [the business of prostitution]...It is economically necessary to promote migration and at the same time to allow women to freely work away from home*<sup>3</sup>

*This was the opinion of one of the most prominent educators in the early Meiji period, a man heavily influenced by seemingly progressive Western ideas. It seems, however, that that Fukuzawa misunderstood the situation. The above remarks create the false impression that Japanese prostitutes left Japan, seeking business opportunities created by Japanese men who were migrating overseas. In fact, it was the other way around, as we have seen - in many instances it was men who followed the karayuki-san.*

#### Notes:

1. There are a number of publications on the history of the karayuki-san system. The most well known work in Japanese is probably Morisaki Kazue's *Karayuki-san* (Asahi Shimbun-sha, Tokyo, 1977). Some publications on this topic are also available in English, such as Yamazaki Tomoko, *Sandakan Brothel No.8: An Episode in the History of Lower-class Japanese Women* (M.E.Sharpe, New York, 1999); and Jim Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san: Prostitution in Singapore 1870-1940* (Oxford University Press, Singapore).
2. Yoshimi Kaneko, op.cit., p.12
3. Fukuzawa Yukichi, "Jinmin no Ijyu to Shofu no Dekasegi" in *jiji Shinpo*, January 18, 1896, cited by Yoshimi Kaneko, op.cit., p.11

**Source:** Japan's Comfort Women; Sexual Slavery and prostitution during World War II and the US Occupation, Yuki Tanaka.

The roundtable adopted the following recommendations given by some participants:

1. To undertake continuing solidarity actions nationally and internationally that would more effectively promote the human rights of the ex-comfort women survivors. Two specific proposals are to launch an international petition to support the call for deliberations of the draft compensation bill being presented at the Japanese Diet by three Japanese senators from different political parties, led by Senator Shoji Motooka; another is to launch an international signature campaign for parliamentarians from different countries to support the draft compensation bill presented at the Japanese Diet, as well as create an international parliamentarians' coalition that would articulate and advocate for support to the deliberations for the draft bill that would provide compensation and formal apology from the Japanese government.
2. To undertake coordination, through the AWHRC and other interested parties, and in cooperation and consultation with artist Andrew Ward and IFOR representative, Jonathan Sisson, for the exhibition of the LOV art installation in various countries of the world.

## Towards a New Political Imagination: Closing Panel

### Vision for Women in the 21st Century Cora Weiss, USA

*I dream*  
*Not day dreams*  
*Nor nightmare dreams.*  
*Not impossible dreams*  
*I dream, "what if" dreams.*

What if AIDS were only a verb? As in, she *aids* her aging parents.  
What if the people fighting pharmaceutical companies and people for peace and justice would support each other? It would multiply our numbers and our strength.

What if the nearly one billion guns and small arms that are in uncontrolled circulation used to kill nearly 6 million people a year - more than those who die from malaria and HIV- what if they were all destroyed?

What if the arms trade were taxed, or stopped?

What if children went to school and learned a new skill? Reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic, AND reconciliation. What if peace were learnt? I dream that peace is integrated into all school curricula.

What if we all learned non-violent options to conflict?

What if nuclear weapons were all abolished?

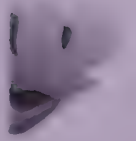
What if half the candidates running for office at every level in every country were women?

I dream that the women of East Timor are half the members of parliament, half the new government.

What if women were at every negotiating table?

Women, my friends, are the glue that holds societies together.





I dream that human rights are never separated from peace and justice.

I dream - what if everyone understood the fifty points of the Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century? It's the way to get from a culture of violence to a culture of peace.

I dream that every child reads and understands the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I dream the results of the Tokyo Women's Tribunal for the trial of Japanese Sexual Slavery be known to all people.

I dream that no country is allowed to have a military budget that is larger than its health and education budgets combined.

I dream that boys learn that penis does not mean power and that race does not mean class.

I dream that women never settle for token numbers anywhere, anymore.

Men have run the world since the beginning of time and from the point of view of violence, illiteracy, poverty, racism and gender inequality- they have failed.

So I dream that one day men will move over and let us run the show.

Finally, I dream that the resolution that women wrote and was unanimously passed by the Security Council, # 1325, is fully implemented.

*What if, just as slavery, colonialism and apartheid have been abolished, so, too, war was abolished? Our laws and our taxes would no longer support men to make weapons and train young people to go to war to kill and destroy.*

I dream of peace and justice.

I dream women will make it happen.

## The challenge to honour our ancestors

*Vicky Corpuz, Philippines*

*We* are besieged by the hegemony of the globalised capitalist world order on all fronts. We are being recolonised even when we still have to get over the colonisation that denigrated us as women, as indigenous peoples, and as Third World citizens. Thus, what we need are wild and audacious thinking and actions that will challenge this hegemonic world order.

Indeed, oppressed peoples had victories that give us hope and strength. The historic defeat of apartheid here in South Africa is one shining example. However, we cannot rest on our laurels, because we heard what was said yesterday by our South African sisters. The new democratic South Africa is still caught in the debt trap where it has to allot 26% of its national budget to pay foreign debts. I remember when Cory Aquino became President in our country because of the 1986 peoples' uprising. One of our basic demands was for her to cancel the foreign debt payments, which was almost 30% of the national budget. To our great dismay, when she assumed power she said that her government will honour and pay every single cent of the foreign debt. We were back to square one again.

Because the South African people won against apartheid and now have a new democratic government, the South is looking up to South Africa to play a lead role in fighting against global structures of oppression. We know that there are tremendous pressures exerted on all countries to be the cogs and wheels of the global capitalist market economy. The power of institutions like the World Bank, the IMF, and the World Trade Organisation, with the backing up of the Group of 7 countries and their corporations is so strong. Governments in the Third World who dare to go against these will face sanctions whether direct or indirect. This is why we respect countries like Cuba and Iraq, in spite of their weaknesses, because they dared to go against the giants. Most governments in our countries, however, are still very subservient to the dictates of the old colonial powers and their institutions.

This makes us wonder whether we can ever rely on governments to represent the interests of the majority who are poor and oppressed. Most governments are still run by the elite in our countries and so-called popular democratic elections are not really democratic. Guns, gold and goons are still very much used to ensure victory for the powerful to get into government. And when they are in power, they get bribed and corrupted by corporations and their representatives to give them favours. In the Philippines, we have seen how even some of our former comrades who got into government, themselves, end up being corrupted.



*Is the western model of democracy and elections appropriate for many countries in the Third World? If there is a government that has been honestly put into power by the oppressed majority, such as the ANC for example, what does it require for it to be able to withstand the dictates of the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO?*

Most of the conflicts existing within our countries are conflicts borne out of the inequalities over access and control of resources such as land, minerals and resources for basic social services. Governments, in most instances, are the ones causing these conflicts. We just held an International Conference in the Philippines on *Conflict Resolution, Peace-Building and Indigenous Peoples*. This confirmed that the basic cause of conflict is the appropriation of indigenous lands and resources by governments and corporations. Efforts to build peace through peace-negotiations fail because governments are only interested in having armed groups surrender their arms but not to address the root causes of conflicts. Intergovernmental bodies like the UN or its specialised agencies and programmes are not very helpful because they are also held captive by governments.

So now we have many questions to ask? Is the western model of democracy and elections appropriate for many countries in the Third World? If there is a government that has been honestly put into power by the oppressed majority, such as the ANC for example, what does it require for it to be able to withstand the dictates of the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO? I have seen how the negotiators from South Africa in the WTO have succumbed to the pressures from the cluster of countries called the Quads (US, Canada, European Union, Japan) even against the united position of the other African countries. For example, the Quads are pushing for a new round of talks at the WTO. Many Third World countries are against this because they would like that the inequities and imbalances in the existing agreements be addressed first. However, the South African Minister of Trade supports the New Round.

Of course, the bigger question is whether the WTO, WB and the IMF should continue to exist. There is a growing anti-globalisation movement that is calling for the dismantling of these bodies. If these are dismantled what kind of international institutions should be created which are in a better position to promote equity, justice, and democracy? What will it require to set up such institutions? Will a reformed and restructured United Nations be able to play this role?

Most of us around here have been actively participating in UN International Conferences and Summits, in lobbying at the UN Commission on Human Rights or the Commission on the Status of Women, etc. Undoubtedly, the international standards created at the UN have helped improve human rights situations in many countries. There is no lack of standards, national laws, declarations, etc. which address each situation of oppression, inequity and environmental destruction, existing in the world today. However, massive poverty and starvation still exists. Violence against women is still prevalent in whichever part of the world. Genocide and ethnocide of indigenous peoples and cultures are still taking place. Ethnic conflicts are erupting like volcanoes. We need to ask ourselves whether these UN processes can really be effective in addressing issues of violence and conflict.

The stories of our sisters which we heard yesterday and today are great sources of inspiration. The strength and resilience of women to survive the worst forms of violence and rise above is a key source of hope. The continuing existence of indigenous peoples who still have their own cosmologies and sustain their governance, economic and cultural systems, even amidst the homogenising impact of globalisation is another. The rising up of the youth, the vibrant anti-globalisation movements from the local levels to the international arena are helping to demolish the myths of globalisation. The hard-hitting criticisms against modern science and technology and against mainstream development are creating alternative thinking and paradigms.

In the conference on conflict resolution that I mentioned earlier, we came up with a declaration that outlined our strategies and visions for peace. I will highlight a few that I think are appropriate for us today.

First, we believe that when we are seeking redress to the grave injustices confronting us, we utilise agencies of international and domestic law. However, we continue to reclaim and revalidate our indigenous ways of resolving disputes, both internally and externally. We have seen how colonisation and now globalisation have universalised the western process of achieving justice and resolving conflicts to the extent that we are constantly forced to turn away from our own institutions and operate within those of western legal paradigms.

We accept the challenge to honour our ancestors by adapting those institutions that they have left to us to restore justice in our lives today. We have also to acknowledge that in revalidating these traditions and institutions of our ancestors, it is necessary that we honestly deal with those ancient practices, which may have led to the oppression of women and children. We also stressed that the transformation of indigenous traditions and culture must be defined and controlled by us, because our right to deal with our own cultures is part of the right to self-determination.

Secondly, we said that peace building in each country means that we must weave together the threads of equality, justice, participatory democracy and recognition and respect for the rights of all peoples and cultures. Peace building means establishing intercultural and other relationships that facilitate peaceful co-existence within a framework of plurality and mutual respect.





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Thirdly, we are calling for the reconceptualisation of the notion of rights. In the law of the coloniser, the source of rights is the individual and rights were given to the individual by an entity called the state. These rights could be given and taken away. States have denied the rights of indigenous peoples as collective people and either replaced them with rights vested in the individual or simply declared that there is no such thing as collective rights or indigenous peoples rights.

We agreed that we must be self-determining in everything we do. We must be self-determining not just in the way we care for Mother Earth, not just in the way we speak, or the way we seek to resolve our conflicts and build peace. We cited the examples such as the Tribunal of Conscience in Central America, which considered water disputes in indigenous peoples' territories. There was the International Tribunal on 100 Years of Colonisation of the Kanaka Maoli in Hawaii. This put into trial the State Government of Hawaii and the Federal Government of the USA.

The example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission here in South Africa is another contribution to the myriad ways of being self-determining in bringing about restorative justice.

The last thing I would like to say is that the biggest challenge for us all is how to rebuild and reconstruct our communities to approximate our vision of a world where justice, equity and peace reign. To dismantle an oppressive system is a big challenge. But to rebuild and reconstruct is the more difficult part.

While we are trying to dismantle systems that are colonial, elitist and patriarchal we should be building structures to replace these. Various movements are fighting against structural adjustment policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, fighting for debt cancellation, against the WTO and against repressive and anti-women governments and institutions.

We have to look into the diverse alternative economic systems that are found in indigenous peoples communities, farming communities, and even the urban poor in both the north and the south. Many of these are efforts of small communities. These should be supported and replicated in various parts of the world.

At the national and international level we need to collectively answer the questions that I posed earlier. I don't have answers for these. *The new political imagination* is for us to grapple with these questions.

## Challenging the "right" to supremacy

*Vjosa Dobruna, Prishtina/Kosovo*

In the 21st century, there are three major issues that pose the biggest threat to human evolution: the application of technology and science, the "Rulers of Law", and the human consciousness toward humane evolution.

### Applications of Technology and Science

Positive developments in technology during the past century enable an exponential increase in the potential for global human advancement. Every major city of the world is accessible from any other within 48 hours of travel. Telecommunication by television and radio of current events informs audiences around the world within minutes of the occurrences. Cures and vaccines for diseases, that used to be the major causes of premature death, have more than doubled the ordinary human life expectancy in some countries.

Yet, the threat of mass human self-destruction has never been greater. Now we have bigger bombs, with chemical consequences that threaten humans and the environment long after the initial blast. With the development of weapons of mass destruction, horrific hardships, unimaginable in past centuries, have been unknowingly and in some cases voluntarily, imposed by particular - groups of humans with access to technology upon masses of others. It used to be that infectious diseases posed the biggest threat to human life. These days, violence and war perpetrated by humans themselves, using weapons of mass destruction cause injury and premature death far more often than external risk factors such as disease or natural disaster.

### *How does this development dynamic affect women?*

A very small percentage of women across the world are involved in science and technology. Men are the leaders of the national defence of almost every country. Men make up the majority of engineers who are developing the newest most powerful killing machines. Men are the ones who make most of the money for selling the weapons. Although women certainly share the benefits and the risks of technology, they have the least voice and decision-making power about how to deploy it.

### The 'Rulers of Law'

The elemental concept of democracy that supports the current world order was founded by the ancient Greeks and was predicated upon equality between only males of a particular class. Thus, the original democracy was defined by the scholarship of a white male supremacist culture that held slaves and subordinated women. Even now, the majority of the world's wealth of diverse ethnic groups and women are the human resources that comprise the world's largest population of under-utilised, undervalued, underpaid and in many cases ignored individuals. Their voices and needs are commonly excluded by white male leaders of Western European origin, who control the strategies for growth and development on the planetary level.



*Modern war is surely the most extreme form of aggression and marks homo sapiens as by far the most aggressive creature that has ever inhabited this planet, aggressive not only within his own species but against all other species, plant and animal*

The global economic and political paradigm that keeps the north and west rich is predicated upon the exploitation of the south and east. For example, during the Cold War of the last century, it was the Soviet Union and its Eastern Block allies that prevented its own citizens from travelling the world freely. This century, Western European nations are the ones who impose harsh visa restrictions on the residents of Southern and Eastern states. In desperation for better living conditions, to escape the prison of poverty, citizens from these southern and eastern countries pay with their life savings, their children, their lives to by-pass the rule of law. They pay underground human smugglers to get them into the western and northern countries. The new system, more powerful in many ways than the rule of law, is the *rule of need* that feeds the complex system of global trafficking in humans - that utilises the same trade routes as illegal transport of drugs, arms, uranium, stolen goods, babies

for adoption, and organs for transplant. As the largest and poorest population on the planet, and the most valuable to the sex industry, women and girls are the people most often trafficked, sold into slavery conditions, and denied visas and travel options by the western and northern countries. These are the same countries that develop laws to prosecute traffickers - but none to prosecute those who purchase the services of those trafficked - *the demand that drives the entire system of post-modern slavery.*

#### *How does the rule of law affect women?*

The vast majority of lawmakers are men. The vast majority of lawbreakers are men. The vast majority of those disempowered by the law are women. Further, women of colour, experience legally supported discrimination on one hand from their position according to the global geopolitical and cultural divides, and on the other hand through their genderised position as women.

#### **Human Consciousness Toward Humane Evolution**

Until recently the majority of western political science and security studies scholars have believed that war and conflict are inalienable characteristics of human nature. Some of these commonly held ideas about human nature being innately aggressive are already 200 to 2000 years old, or older, but many of the most educated and intellectually capable adults in the leadership positions of today's world accept these concepts as ultimate truth and rarely question them.

In focusing on political leaders and visible scholars, media to date has interpreted these concepts that imply that the human psyche is violent in a positive way that glorifies aggression, perhaps by identifying with the aggressor or using the dualistic win or lose language and cultural filters. While authoritative experts attribute aggressive and violent behaviours to human nature, alternative views and methods for developing cooperative relationships are too often selectively omitted from sight and public conscious awareness.

The combined effect of focusing on aggression and ignoring collaboration fosters a widespread subliminal understanding that values which motivate behaviour intended to hurt other people are socially acceptable under certain conditions, when in fact, these behaviours in different contexts are the value-driven behaviours that most often threaten human existence. *Modern war is surely the most extreme form of aggression and marks homo sapiens as by far the most aggressive creature that has ever inhabited this planet, aggressive not only within his own species but against all other species, plant and animal.*

Thankfully, age old ideas about the aggressive nature of human nature have been the stepping stones to new theories developing in the academic disciplines of psychology, sociology, political theory and theology that demonstrate how conflictive behaviour is taught and learnt in many cases, rather than an innate or instinctual response. Essentially, most new theories share a common theme, there are alternatives to the self-destructive system we have created for ourselves. Now we know that human behaviour is motivated to a large degree by traditional belief systems that contain embedded values, some of which condone discrimination, domination, aggression and violence under particular conditions (Eisler, 1987, p 98).

*How do new theories about human nature affect women?*

Much of the conflict among humans seems to stem from discriminatory attitudes about individuals identified by ethnicity and gender. Those who exhibit discriminatory attitudes through behaviour of domination, subjugation and violence appear to hold in common the value that they are in some way superior, or have the right to exercise supremacist behaviours over others. It would be logical to assume that the next stage of human evolution will challenge the perceived *right* to exercise supremacist behaviour over others. It would be logical to assume that the next stage of human evolution will challenge the perceived *right* to supremacy, based on ethnicity and gender, and will develop alternative cooperative strategies for maximising planetary resources including the contribution that the currently incapacitated populations of specific ethnic origins, and women have to offer.





*We must remember that the  
master's tool will never dismantle  
the master's house*

Audre Lourde

## World Court of Women against Racism

*August 30, 2001*

*Durban  
South Africa*

The Asian Women's Human Rights Council and El Taller International, in collaboration with the Institute for Black Research, University of Natal; the University of the Western Cape, Women's Support Network, Cape Town; the Durban Social Forum, SANGOCO and several other national and international NGO's organised the World Court for Women against Racism on August 30, 2001 at Natal Technikon as part of the NGO forum that preceded to the World Conference Against Racism. The Court was also part of the *Pavement Conference* that took place outside the formal NGO process, to enable the participation of all those from Durban and other townships around who could not be part of the NGO process

About thirty testifiers from different region of the world presented their testimonies and expert witnesses to a five member Jury and an audience of about 2000 women and men. We include in this section some of the testimonies and the jury statement presented during the Court.



## The Vision

*The World Court of Women Against Racism*, through the testimonies of women and men victims, survivors and resisters to the different forms and faces of racism, sought to proffer an understanding of and response to the many-layered narratives of the lasting legacy of colonialism. Narratives that are woven around the central narrative of the *other* – a creature and creation of the modern dualistic mind. A mind that needs first to *externalise* and *exorcise* the monster within, through the creation of the *other*, who it then proceeds to *experiment with and exterminate* as an object that can be sacrificed at the altar of modern science and then ensure its total *erasure* through its cooption into the *New Global Order* either as a consumer, commodity or object of conservation.

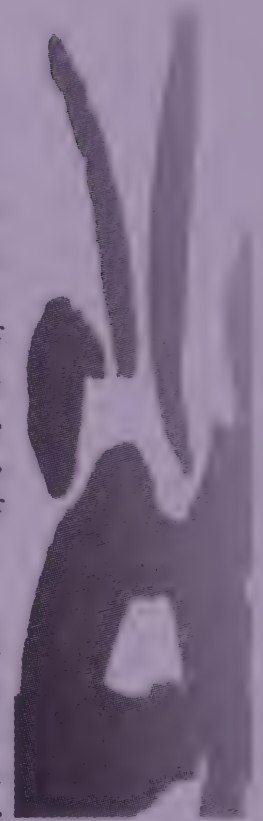
From the creation of the *other* through the colonial project of European enlightenment and expansionism that saw the *non west* as resource to be exploited and appropriated and non western people as barbarians to be developed or destroyed; to the erasure of the other in the neo colonial project of globalisation that has institutionalised *structural racism* that perpetuates a pervasive pattern of discrimination and disadvantage for specific ethnic and racial groups - *the circle is complete*.

The Court sought to understand how in this *master narrative* the woman has been created and recreated as a permanent *gendered other*; reduced to a biological entity that has become the *contested site* in conflicts of many kinds. Whether it is as a victim of rape as a form of ethnic cleansing or in caste conflicts; as a womb in which was born the *stolen generation*; in which was implanted the seeds of a nuclear future; whose femininity is a threat that has been permanently fettered by a fundamentalist paranoia; the migrant and the refugee woman who is trafficked and who most often than not is poor, dalit, minority, third world....

Liberalism, multiculturalism, democracy, scientific rationality, universality of the human rights discourse... have now emerged over the past few decades as the defenders of the *new world order*, as bulwarks against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all kinds of related intolerance. Racism, a legacy of colonization that the colonised are now attempting to counter through achieving mastery over the tools of the former colonial masters. And through this, regain autonomy and control over their land, their resources, their lives. But unfortunately the violence of colonisation has proved to be far more insidious. For finally it is the *colonisation of the mind* that has proved to be the legacy that has been most enduring and devastating.

Racism that continues to recreate itself in contemporary times, is a tragic testimony to this fact.

The testimonies were heard in five sessions. Each session looking at different aspect of the issue of racism.







### The Testimonies

The first session on *creating the other* listened to testimonies that sought to condemn colonisation as the archetypal racist project that not only inaugurated an era of universalised violence but also sought to establish and institutionalise the supremacy of the White, the European, and the West.

The second session on *Against Forgetting the Other* listened to victims and survivors of indigenous forms of racism and descent based intolerance.

The third session on *Erasing the Other* focussed on the patterns of globalisation as an institutionalised form of colonisation that is inherently racist in that it seeks to consolidate the supremacy of the North. It also looked at the politics of global powers in which the other continues to be occupied to be driven to being a refugee a migrant, an exile in which as a weapon of modern statecraft economic sanctions are deployed by as a weapon of mass destruction by economically more powerful European nation against poorer third world countries like Iraq and Cuba.

Session four *Exterminating the Other* looked at a hitherto unspoken face of racism- nuclearisation. For scientific rationality and militarisation as the by products of colonialism, together produced the most genocidal form of extermination ever. It was not a coincidence that for instance the process of going nuclear was highly racist. It has been established beyond doubt that the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the nuclear tests conducted on Bikini islands in the Pacific by the USA, were deliberate scientific experiments conducted on a population that was by deliberate definition and choice, non white.

Session five *To Dare to Dream* heard voices that testified to the spirit of resistance that sought redress and reparations in the attempt to right centuries of wrongs; that sought to right and rewrite history; to retrieve the memories of the marginalised; the knowledge's that have been submerged, silenced; that refused the attempt to distort but dared to keep the dream.

### The Council of Wisdom

The final session *Council of Wisdom* was the space for the Jury to respond. The jury members comprised of *Fatima Meer* from the Institute of Black Research, University of Natal, South Africa; *Ashis Nandy*, from the *Center for the Study of Development Societies* in India; Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Nobel peace Laureate from Guatemala, Mexico; Marilia Schuller from the World Council of Churches, Brazil and Pitikin N'tuli from the University of Natal, South Africa. For lack of time Ashis Nandy gave the statement on behalf of the Jury.

The spirit of the Court was beautifully captured by Pitikin N'tuli, who truly delivered poetic justice when he recited a poem at the end of the Court; a poem he wrote listening to the testimonies through the day; a poem that echoed the pain and power woven into the life narratives of every woman who spoke as a resistor to racism, to intolerance to xenophobia- for she has known only too well the reality of being a permanently gendered *other* in all cultures and societies, particularly in times in which the one, the universal, is also the aggressive male, the masculine.



## Hanan Ashrawi

Thank you, World Court of Women against Racism, for daring to storm the bastions of power and to give a hearing to the disempowered. Thank you for defying the darkness of racism and hatred to shed light on the *invisible victims*. Thank you for challenging the prevailing *master* narrative: and providing a forum for the authentic narratives of the *silenced* to enable them to gain mastery over their lives.

We thank you, Corinne Kumar for being true to your gender and faithful to your mission despite tremendous odds, and for convening this World Court of Women against Racism as a tribute to the human spirit and a forum in which testimonies can not only be heard but also legitimised. You are giving witnesses and victims, survivors and resisters, the validation not only of their suffering, but also of the hopes and dreams that they have dared to harbour.

Sisters and brothers,

The genuine human narrative is the sum total of these individual stories that can break through the barriers of silence, exclusion, subjugation, and negation. It is imperative, therefore that the first person singular is granted both time and place to claim its own legitimacy, whereby the *I* as the still quiet voice of the *other* can gain resonance and can resound through the consciousness and conscience of those who looked the other way in complacency, or were complicit in crime.

I stand before you today to declare not only my solidarity but also my belonging.

I am a woman, therefore at the heart of the conflict where the gender is the convenient excuse for marginalisation, discrimination, and subjugation. And I am proud to be a woman in defiance of brutality and domination.

I am a Palestinian, therefore the historical target of military occupation, oppression, denial, and national obliteration. And I am proud of my Palestinian identity, history, and struggle, as an embodiment of human will to resist and to endure.

I am an Arab, therefore maligned in the essence of my heritage by xenophobia, Islamophobia, and stereotypical distortions. And I am proud of my Arab belonging to an ancient and rich culture that had harboured the birth of civilization as the first legacy and generated forces of enlightenment throughout the world.

I come from the third world the *south*, therefore I cast my lot with the exploited and the excluded who daily undergo a wilful devaluation of rights, liberties, land and resources. And I am proud of the promise inherent in our refusal to succumb to the power of destruction.

Opening Address by Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Palestinian Legislative Council, to the World Court of Women against Racism, Durban, August 30, 2001.





I come from the "East" [the Middle East as framed by the West]; therefore I am an "alien", the "other" the incomprehensible human component that would not shed its identity and humanity. And I am proud that despite all attempts at cultural negation, ignorance, and racism, we have maintained our integrity, and authenticity.

No human being can be reduced to a series of labels, or compartmentalized into isolated and prepackaged units, or reduced to simplistic categories for the convenience of others. There are no easy external handles to encompass the full reality of a human being. For each and every one of us is an integrated whole, not subject to fragmentation, isolation, or stereotypical reduction. The nature of total colonisation imposes such an affair and artificial disintegration of the self. Ours is a challenge to heal and make whole both the individual and the collective.

The people of Palestine continue to languish in captivity and exile under the most pervasive form of multiple victimization. The past has handed us a painful legacy of expulsion, dispossession, and dispersion along with the injustice of occupation, apartheid, and national eradication. Our present is tainted with the continued manifestations of this most repressive and intrusive injustice in the form of captivity and military coercion. Under siege, the Palestinian people are being shelled, bombed and assassinated, their homes demolished, their crops razed, and their rights suppressed.. In exile, the Palestinian refugees remain vulnerable hostages, denied their right to return to their homes and lands and bereft of all human consideration. In Israel, the indigenous Palestinians are forced to endure the most horrific form of apartheid and exclusion.

The sum total of the Palestinian experience remains a horrendous tale in which crimes against humanity and repeated acts of violence and violation perpetrated by Israeli occupation in its regression into fundamentalists Zionism have become the prevailing narrative. Blaming the victim as part of the wilful policy of dehumanisation and demonisation, has become the "acceptable discourse" propagated by the oppressor for the justification of the evil of oppression.

A process of desensitisation has cast a shadow over the pain of a nation overwhelmed by injustice, but deprived of the protection of international law and moral imperatives. While Israel persists in its policies of state terrorism as a means for the enslavement of a whole nation, the Palestinians are denied any means of protection or succour. Having used the full force of the military in an attempt to pound the Palestinian into submission, Israel is intent on repeating the mistakes of history. No amount of brutality, no degree of cruelty and no measure of violence can break the will of a people bent on attaining their freedom, dignity, and independence on their own land.

Our worst enemy is the forced anonymity of the victim, the relegation of individual identities to the realm of abstractions and numbers designed to immunize the world against the horror and to exonerate the perpetrator; thus the requisite of recognition of culpability and admission of guilt as a first step towards rectification and redemption are blurred and even denied. Anonymity negates the enormity of the crime and blunts its edge.







Yet we still have our human icons that have intruded on numbness induced by the seemingly mundane repetition of pain. The child, Muhammad al-Durra, was murdered before the eyes of the world in the arms of his father who remained helpless before the onslaught of death. The infant, Iman Hijjo, was shattered by an obscene shell while seeking shelter in her mother's lap. Faris Odeh was the young boy who faced an Israeli tank alone armed with a stone and the innocent courage of childhood. He too was murdered. They bear witness to the cruel murder of the 166 other Palestinian children who were sent to an early grave by the Israeli occupation during the last eleven months.

So does Mu'in Abu Lawyeh who defied the siege and hiked through the rough hillside intent on the subversive task of buying school supplies for his three young children. Mowed down in cold blood, he too bears witness to the 626 other victims, each with his/her own narrative. He also bears witness to the unique racism of "by-pass" roads, built on stolen Palestinian land, for the exclusive use of illegal Jewish settlers intent on terrorizing a whole Palestinian population whose territorial and national patrimony has been usurped.

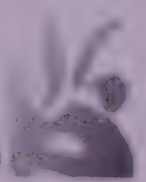
The assassination of Dr. Thabet Thabet also stands out in a series of "extra judicial killings" as the execution without trial being carried out by Israel as a matter of policy. More than forty activists, political leaders, and innocent bystanders have been blown to bits or burnt to a crisp by missiles and shells fired anonymously from Apache gunships and Merkava tanks at their unsuspecting (and not anonymous) human targets. Dr. Thabet was assassinated for daring to dream of peace, to launch a dialogue of reconciliation and coexistence with Israeli counterparts. With the "extermination" of such leaders, and with the "triumph" of Israel's death squads and army "hit-men," Israel is dealing a fatal blow to the chances of (and constituency for) peace. It also unveils the real and gruesome nature of a violent occupation on the rampage.

Nevertheless, the lessons of history persist, however blinded by power by power and intoxicated by bloodlust the colonizer might be. No colonial power has ever succeeded in maintaining its domination and exploitation of a nation forever. No scheme of ethnic cleansing has ever destroyed the cohesive fabric and endurance of a people committed to life and to the triumph of the human spirit. Ours is a struggle in which the powerful is doomed to be vanquished by the empowerment of the weak.

Israel's militarisation may have conquered Palestine by the force of arms, but is attempting to conquer the world by the sale of arms, creating an unholy fraternity of global "corporate masters" while it simultaneously seeks to maintain its obsolete "colonial mastery." Its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction remains entirely immune to any form of transparency or accountability, while it continues to behave as a rogue state outside the rule of law. Its version of history remains a fabricated fiction based on erasing the authentic narrative of its victims, hence a historical forgery. We may not be in possession of Israel's sources of power but we are in possession of our own will and vision of justice, peace, and the vindication of history. Such is the spring and source of human power.







*No scheme of ethnic cleansing  
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Such is the power generated by our gender, unified despite the multi-tiered and multi-faceted forms of oppression, discrimination exploitation, exclusion, militarism, and violence exercised against our discourse and our very being. On behalf of the women of Palestine, I reach out to you in solidarity and sisterhood, and I look to you for intervention and redress Imprisoned in their homes, enduring the daily terror of shelling and bombardment, giving birth (and even dying) at Israeli military checkpoints, tormented by the

assassination of their children as well as by their inability to protect and provide comfort against the all-pervasive military assaults and incursions, searching for food and water denied them by the siege and the theft of their land, standing before the bulldozers that demolish their homes, and facing armed Israeli soldiers with unwavering determination and the courage to persist.

No brutality or other means of subjugation is able to match the comprehensive system of colonization manifested by the military occupation as a structure of domination and deprivation. The women of Palestine, struggling for recognition and validation within their own society, are simultaneously victimized by this most intrusive form of settler colonialism and national denial. Collective and individual aggression and violence have invaded the world of every Palestinian woman. Yet we remain, standing firm in our deep-rootedness and belonging to our land and people, our sights cast high above and beyond the confines of our prison, and our courage deeply embedded within our hearts. For we know that we are not alone and we have not been abandoned. The hand you extend to us, the recognition and affirmation with which you embrace us, and the determination you exhibit in gaining a hearing and an audience for our narrative – all empower us to stay our course.

Sisters and brothers,

Not only do we have a memory, both individual and collective, but we also have a vision of a better future and a dream that cannot be dimmed. From all over the world, we come together, joined by our courage to maintain hope and to dare to dream. I am confident that we shall prevail.



*You have come from all over the world  
You spoke with one voice  
And the voice says:  
I have carried silences in me  
I have been an absence in my presence  
Yet I have risen to give voice to my silences.  
Now my silences are loud  
with rhythmic songs of resistance  
And my absences are vivid presences  
They speak the language triumph  
despite the theft of my native tongue  
despite the cyclones of poverty  
I will continue to rise.*

*From many lands you have come  
burdened with pains and memories of pain  
With defiance stronger than armies  
With the resilience of the sun  
that rises and sets  
And rises again and again*

*You walk silently and gently  
without disturbing the morning dew  
I too had sprung from a womb  
In Hawaii, in India,  
In Indonesia, in Philippines  
I am a messiah  
I am a dalit  
That refuses to die*

*I am a Hawaiian  
My culture raped by tourists gaze  
I come from a beautiful, militarised  
set of islands  
Best I am a Hawaiian woman  
Worst I am a Hawaiian woman  
Who defies the ego of America  
I am a Palestinian  
Bombed , maimed, assassinated*

*I am many people  
Worst I am too many people  
Best I am all the women who resist  
I am messiah  
who passed pillar to post  
Worst I am a messiah woman  
Best I am a messiah woman  
who resists  
Better still  
women who revolt  
against those who order  
our dreams to kneel  
before their guns*

Pitikin N'tuli, South Africa

Jury member, World Court of Women on Racism





# There are only 98,000 people there; who gives a damn

Testimony on Nuclear Racism

*Chiyoko Tamayose,*

Survivor from Rongelap Atoll

*My* name is Chiyoko Tamayose. I come from Rongelap atoll in the Marshall Islands. The Marshall Islands are located in the regions that is known as Micronesia, in the north Pacific Ocean.



I was asked to give a testimony on the topic of nuclear racism. The following is a brief history of what occurred in the Marshall Islands.

Prior to World War II, the Japanese Imperial Government was given the mandate to oversee the entire Micronesia region. After the war, the United Nations created a trusteeship of this region and entrusted it to the care of the United States of America. Under this trusteeship, the United States was obligated to promote the advancement of the people of Micronesia - socially, economically and educationally toward self-sufficiency.

The first act of the United States Government was in locating a suitable site to conduct atomic and nuclear tests - a site away from home! Bikini atoll in the Marshall Islands was chosen. It made no difference that people were living there. They were relocated elsewhere.

On a Sunday morning in 1946 as the Bikini people emerged from Sunday worship service, the U.S. military Commodore Wyatt met them and asked, "*would you give up your land to be used for something that will benefit mankind?*" After deliberating for a short while, Chief Judah responded: "*if it is God's will then we will.*" The people of Bikini gave up their homeland with the idea that it was temporary, that soon after, they would return home. That was not so!

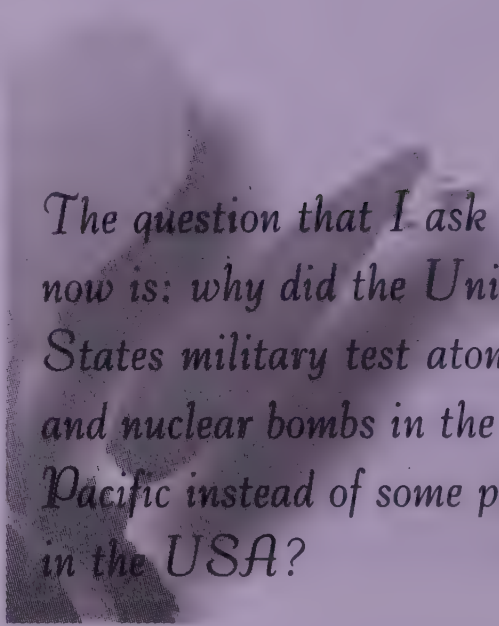
The US military conducted a series of 67 atomic and nuclear tests on Bikini and Enewetak Atolls from June 30, 1946 to August 18, 1959. As a result, the people and the environment were subjected to repeated radiation contamination. There are many Marshallese who have suffered from such types of cancer as thyroid and leukemia. Our women have given births to fetuses that have no resemblance to human forms, to deformed babies, mentally and physically challenged children. Over forty years later, these types of health problems still plague the Marshallese people. Our land is still very highly contaminated which makes it too dangerous for us to return home.

In March of 1954, the hydrogen bomb code named *Bravo* was detonated on Bikini atoll. *Bravo* is estimated to be 750 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The 15 megaton blast vaporized the test island, eradicated parts of two adjacent islets and created a mile wide crater.

Recently declassified documents show that U.S. officials were aware 72 hours before the *Bravo* test that winds in the area were shifting and if the test was carried out, radiation would fall on Rongelap and other atolls downwind. Unlike previous times when the people were evacuated -this time nothing was done until two days later when the people were evacuated. However, that was too late since the people were already exposed to nuclear fallout. *It is strongly believed that they were purposely left alone in order to use as guinea pigs.*



Three years later in 1957, the people of Rongelap were prematurely told that it was safe to return home! I was one of those who returned to Rongelap. I ate food from the land and seafood that was irradiated. I became violently sick and believed I would die. The physician who examined me informed that the level of radiation poison in my system was much higher than of those who were exposed to radiation fallout. Today I have problems with my thyroid. I had thyroid surgery and the doctor who monitors the progress of some inflamed lumps in my throat says that I may require another surgery. I have twelve children: one is physically handicapped and another one displays signs of growth retardation. The forms of cancer diseases which I previously mentioned are common in the Marshall Islands, especially among families from the atolls that were affected by nuclear fallout. We strongly believe that our health problems are directly caused from radiation exposure.



*The question that I ask now is: why did the United States military test atomic and nuclear bombs in the Pacific instead of some place in the USA?*

The question that I ask now is: why did the United States military test atomic and nuclear bombs in the Pacific instead of some place in the USA? The Marshall Islands are a collection of low-lying coral atolls, and very small in comparison to the immense land mass in the United States.

The answer is clear - there were people of colour living there - who cares? This pattern of thinking was reflected in what Henry Kissinger, the former U.S. Secretary of State, was quoted to have said, "*there are only 98,000 people there; who gives a damn.*"

The United Church of Christ (UCC) Commission for Racial Justice produced a pamphlet on 'racism' and one of the definitions of racism I will lift up is: *prejudice plus power*. That was exactly what prompted the U.S. military to conduct 67 atomic and nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands and as a result it dangerously put the health of the entire population and their neighbouring island nations at risk for generations to come!

It has been over 50 years now since the people of Bikini atoll were relocated from their homeland; they still wait for the day when it will be safe to return. My people of Rongelap atoll cannot go back and resettle on Rongelap either. Rongelap is very highly contaminated from radiation fallout.

In the meantime, we have continued to suffer from cancer related diseases and our children have suffered too. Many of us have left the Marshall Islands for Hawaii and other states in order to be nearer to better medical facilities that will treat our special cases.

This is our *nuclear racism* legacy that we received from the United States.





## We are ghosts, forced to disappear

Testimony on Zionism as Racism

*Liana Badr, Palestine*



*My* mother told me that when I was a little girl, I used to constantly ask her about the whereabouts of my father, a political prisoner. She told me that I never understood the secret of his absence.... until one day, I accompanied her to the grocery store to buy chocolate. That day, she explained that my father was the type of man who refused injustice and inequality. To make me understand what those words meant, she told me that my father refused to accept that some children have access to chocolate, whereas others were denied that right.

My mother added that the struggle against colonialism was the reason behind my father's imprisonment: my father was confined to a narrow and small place – called a prison – to prevent him from his struggle and to stop him from bringing chocolate to needy children. When she told me this, I was very angry and I told that she should take colonialism, lock him up in the bathroom and beat him into pieces with a stick.

For me, this childhood anecdote is an abbreviated and illustrative story of racism... Racism is the denial of rights... right to water, air, land, country, freedom, hope, independence and dignity.

That is the lesson my activist mother taught me when we were living in our home in Arab, Jerusalem in the early 1950s....the house that I have not been able to return to since June 1967. Since the Six Day War, Israel has largely prevented displaced Palestinians from returning to their home. Men and women, students and children, the elderly and the ill – who happened to be abroad when the war broke out have not been able to return.

My sisters and I were victims of this policy of exile. During the war, my father sent us away to live with relatives in Jordan. He was afraid of exposing us to the hardships of war...especially since my mother had passed away, and there was no one to take care of us during his absence from the house. Several hours after we had crossed the bridge to Jordan, the Israeli army bombed the bridge. Out of my family, I was the only person who was able to return to the West Bank after 27 years of exile.

I returned to the West Bank after the signature of the Oslo agreement. I returned with my people, full of hope and optimism, to our homeland. Prospects of peace, however, were illusive. We gradually discovered that the Agreement was not the pathway to freedom and independence, but was rather another sophisticated tool to enslave us. Our hopes of justice and peace dissipated in front Israeli policy of discrimination and occupation.

My identity as a Jerusalemite has been negated. Upon my return, I was issued a West Bank identity card, which does not allow me to enter freely into my hometown of Jerusalem. The document also changed my place of birth from Jerusalem to Israel. I was not born in Israel when I was born in the early fifties...Israel had not yet occupied Arab Jerusalem. This is just another Israeli way of denying the Palestinians access to and claim to Arab Jerusalem.





Even before the outbreak of the current crisis, during the so-called peace process, Palestinians seeking to go to East Jerusalem for any reason were required to apply for a permit from the Israeli military authorities. This general closure and permit policy -in effect to the present- means that I am not able to visit Jerusalem freely. In most cases I am forced to visit Jerusalem hurriedly and furtively I snatch these stolen moments to see my extended family.

*Nearly everyday, a  
Palestinian house is  
demolished. Those that  
destroy our lives display no  
guilt, no apology, no shame*

All my ties with Jerusalem – my place of birth ...have been eroded by the Israeli military forces. Access to Jerusalem, to my traditional family home, to my extended family, has been denied. When I returned to the West Bank in 1994, I found that my grandmother's house near the Mount Olive in Arab Jerusalem had been demolished. The destruction of the house of my grandmother, Zlikha Shibabi, was the culmination of a long history of confiscation of our property by the Israelis. First, in the forties, there was the confiscation of four dunums of my grandparents property in Arab Jerusalem. ....the property was located in an area under the responsibility and supervision of the UN at that time. The land was taken from my family and was used by the Hebrew University to expand their park. The park is now named after Jewish donors, who probably never even knew Jerusalem. Perhaps they never even knew that the park was created on stolen land.

In 1999, without informing our family, the Israeli military bulldozed our house in Arab Jerusalem and razed the olive trees spread across our hundred dunum property. The olive trees planted painstakingly by my ancestors and the house, built over a hundred years ago, were razed in seconds. Our land has been transformed into a garden for Jewish students. Our house and land has been denied to us, because we are the Palestinian owners.

Over the past decades, the Israelis have continuously expropriated Palestinian land in Arab Jerusalem, in the West Bank and in Gaza. They confiscated our land to build *settlements* and to build bypass roads to connect the settlements together. By claiming themselves owners of our land, they have falsified and even negated our identity. *Settlements have been built on the remains of houses and olive trees.* Nearly everyday, a Palestinian house is demolished. Those that destroy our lives display no guilt, no apology, no shame.

In most cases pretexts are invented to justify house demolition or land confiscation. In Arab Jerusalem, the Israeli authority often claim that the Palestinians build their houses *illegally* in general, this means that the Palestinian families were denied their relevant permit by the Israeli authorities to build or expand their homes. In other cases, some Israelis falsely claim that Palestinians sold them their homes or their land. Generally on the day of land expropriation, Israeli settlers show up in front of the Palestinian house brandishing a land deed forged or obtained illegally in almost all cases, and accompanied by the army or the police. The Israeli settlers force the Palestinian family to evacuate their homes and then the settlers take over these homes. The Palestinian family may attempt to go to court to prove ownership of this land and house, but generally to no avail...

The policy of *closure and permit*, imposed by the Israeli authorities since the early 1990s, restricts the movement of Palestinian people. The policy means that Palestinians, *citizens* of the Palestinian Authority, are not allowed to freely enter the Holy City without a permit from the Israeli military authorities. A Palestinian registered car (with a green plate) can not travel through Israeli controlled land, including Arab Jerusalem, without a special permit, which is rarely issued.





The policy also means that a West Bank resident seeking to enter Gaza (and vice versa), must first apply for a permit from the Israeli authorities. In addition to general restrictions on movement Israeli authorities have intermittently scaled down the crossings between Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory, either cancelling or refusing to honour travel permits. I remember that when my cousin in the West Bank fell in love with a young fellow from Gaza, my aunt could not stop weeping. She was so afraid that the couple would move to Gaza and that she would not be able to see her daughter ever again. Sadly enough, my cousin's husband died two years after the marriage. He had leukaemia and due to the closure, he was not able to receive the proper medical treatment.

The Israeli occupation forces, during the entire Oslo *peace process*, transformed us into prisoners and hostages inside our own country. The *peace process* did not stop the Israelis from controlling our movement, from expropriating our land, from demolishing our houses and razing our trees and from building or expanding Israeli settlements on occupied land. And despite the continuous violation of our political, civil, economic and social rights by the Israeli's occupation forces, we were expected to be grateful for this *opportunity of peace*. *Should we have been thankful that the occupier transformed our land into a fenced-in prison camp?*

Any word or proclamation on our right to independence, any effort at ensuring the right of refugees has been construed as problematic, as against the *peace process*. It is as if it were an unforgivable crime to talk about the millions of Palestinian refugees, who were forced to leave their homes, to live in exile, to live scattered across dozens of refugee camps. *The right of return of Palestinian refugees, guaranteed by international law, has been constantly violated, whereas the Israeli law entitles Jews from any part of the world to live in Israel.* Our families have been uprooted and dispossessed, scattered all around the world.

When we showed our resistance against occupation, we were accused of using violence or of losing this *opportunity of peace*. Our struggle for our rights has been met with military action by the Israeli occupation force and with the intensification of the Israeli policy of closure.

Since the outbreak of the crisis in September 2000, movement restrictions have become even more severe. More and more checkpoints have been established within the West Bank and Gaza to control the movement of Palestinian persons. Most of the main roads have been cut off and frequently, vehicle mobility on main roads is reserved for Israelis. Villages and camps are cut off from surrounding towns. Palestinians can only move from one place to another by walking on unpaved winding dirt roads, punctuated with roadblocks and trenches. Even a 90 year old man has been forced to walk, to use his tired feet to climb over mud fences and barriers, to navigate through trees, to descend the valley, under the hot summer sun. Carts and donkeys are being used more and more frequently in such circumstances... whereas several meters down on the main road, an Israeli settler can move freely in his own car, from one settlement to another.

*We are ghosts, forced to disappear.* Yet, we are without the lightness of being, contrary to Milan Kundera's novel.

Every Palestinian feels like he or she is confined to his or her home. It is as if we are being told that our every action is an accusation or security risk against Israel and are therefore prevented from undertaking our every day tasks. Going to University has become dangerous, visiting family members in neighbouring village has become a challenge and reaching the place of work has become impossible for hundreds of workers. Movement of goods and services has become restricted and our economy is being crippled. To market agricultural goods, farmers travel on zigzag roads, and place their goods on the backs of donkeys. We are forced to consume Israeli goods, since we do not have easy access to Palestinian produces.





For hundreds of rural women, delivering a baby in a clinic or hospital has become a luxury. Dozens of rural women have given birth at checkpoints, because Israeli soldiers did not allow them to pass through to the adjacent town. Cases of Palestinians with severe health problems (heart attack, asthmatic crisis.) forced to wait for hours at end at the checkpoint have been documented. *For some, checkpoints have become the cause of death.*

For thousands of students, going to schools or universities has become a dangerous fear. Israeli soldiers regularly close the road leading to Birzeit University and open fire on those that attempt to cross the road. My colleague at work for example was shot on her way to her classes and her brother, a university student, was killed at the checkpoint.

This policy of curfews and siege imposed by the Israeli military forces often referred to as *collective punishment* – has rendered us prisoners in our own land. It is as if we live in a big camp encircled by walls and fences and barricaded by checkpoints and roadblocks. On the contrary, every day the Israeli army are killing or shooting people daily, on the roads, inside their offices, on the middle of their homes. We resist the occupation and its policies because we have our dreams. *We dream of planting olive trees and of harvesting.* All the while, the Israeli military forces are uprooting tens of thousands of trees every year.

We dream of walking down the main streets, of driving through the main roads without the threat of the army or the settler's snipers.

We dream of building houses, of renovating our ancestral homes. All the while the Israeli military forces demolish our homes and confiscate thousands of hectares of our land, to build settlements and bypass roads on stolen land.

We dream of securing abundant flowing water. All the while, the Israeli settlers water the grass in empty settlements.

We dream of seeing our families who live a few kilometres away. All the while, the years pass by and we remain separated and afar despite the nearness

We dream of praying in our Holy City. We dream of Jerusalem, with its many religions, cultures and its spiritually. All the while, we are denied entrance to our mosques and churches.

We dream of a sovereign Palestinian Nation. All the while, we live without autonomy and independence. We dream that colonialism and occupation will be swept away by the tides of the future, because the master cannot keep deceiving the world under his new mask for ever.







# We want our value systems ubuntu to return to our communities and our country

*Testimony on Resistance after Apartheid*

*Nise Malange, South Africa*



*Everyone who has died  
is here today  
Those who died in the struggle of the people  
Are here  
Singing with us  
They are holding our hands  
Just that touch  
Moving through all our bodies  
Like a bloodstream.*

*Our babies and children who died  
Because of the system  
Are here playing around  
On this day  
They are observing and learning  
From us for their next lives.*

(extract from my poem "Today")



*I* think it is appropriate for me to begin my testimony with these line from my poem because if we mess up again, our children born and unborn will continue the same way as we do.

Comrades, women, mothers and sisters, my fellow brothers, it is a great honour and pleasure for me to be amongst you, delegates from all over the world. Welcome to our city, province and country. I know some of you are here for the first time, I hope that as much as you are here for the conference but you will also take time to see and know more about our city, province and the country.

Today I'm standing in front of all of you to testify about Resistance after Apartheid. It is an emotional and spiritual challenge, a journey that I refuse to prepare myself, a path that is lonely and scary to walk. It is the fear of the unknown because of the past experience. When we were in our briefing session women asked questions about the safety of women from Iraq and maybe many other countries have those questions, those were the fears of South Africans not so long ago. Those questions made me realise where we come from and how important freedom and freedom of speech is. We tend to take freedom of movement and speech for granted, those of us who are free... We need to value our freedom and we have to protect it in all costs. The question and challenge is how are we going to protect it.



We come from a brutal past and we know how we have survived that past. It was through resistance and quest for freedom and justice that apartheid was conquered. The fact that today we can proudly host international and historical conferences like this is one of those achievement we should celebrate. Apartheid, South Africa and racism are synonymous, it was difficult for people to understand how a majority in their own land cannot own land. How can a family of 10 live in a matchbox, how can people live with no water and sanitation. It was difficult for people to understand how we manage to dance and laugh when we faced police brutality in the townships, schools, churches that were resisting apartheid. I remember that I wrote my matric with armed soldiers in the classroom and the whole school look like an army base. This is with even the past with after seven years after our first democratic election we still trying to deal. It is the past that is causing amnesia in some people and impatience in others; it is the fear of the past that makes us restless. It is the past that we must all say – it must never happen again. History has a way of repeating itself. *The challenge that is facing us after apartheid – is to make sure that racism and fascism are not given any chance to make their ugly appearance.* We have to hit it in the head. How are we going to do this – leaders have to have some accountability to the people, true democracy should prevail and people first before the profit.

We have inherited so much of apartheid's baggage like poverty and diseases, crime, violence and brutality, disrespect for life and nature, unemployment, landlessness and homelessness, corruption and selfishness, mistrust and many more wrongs of colonial rule. On the other hand we were dreaming of liberation, justice, freedom of speech... When we got our liberation we wanted redress of the imbalances caused by apartheid and we hoped that things would speed up and we could be humans again in our country. We are told that these things take time to be changed, that consultation is no longer necessary and so there can be no accountability. We have waited for long and sometimes it seems that as if we wait for another five or ten years it might be too long, we might die before owning a house or before going back to the land from where we were removed, where our ancestors are buried.

*"..peasant women came with their withering shawls,  
they came with bare foot, broken with no shoes,  
but their husbands out there in the mines producing the wealth they never enjoyed"*

(quote from my poem titled The Trails of Blood, Tears and Repression – unpublished 1988)

This is still the situation today in our country. Are we unreasonable when we ask for jobs, food shelter, free and compulsory education for all.

Are we not supposed to dream about food for all, house for all, education for all, jobs for all, land for the landless, crime free country. Are we not supposed to build our Utopia that has made us survive the years of brutality and make it a reality? My poetry is the testimony of my resistance against apartheid and I have committed myself to protect our rights and be a voice for the women.

*all the meetings and organisations  
will be silenced and my voice will not reach you  
It does not matter  
You will continue to hear me, I will always be beside you,  
And my memory will always be loyal to you  
And we will overcome this grey and bitter moment...*

( my poem "Long Live Women" extract) ..





This is my commitment to women and my country that I made in the 80's before the 1986's State of Emergency. Each time I feel I am sinking and I am losing hope I'm thinking about this commitment and I move on again. I am sure if we talk, we don't silence ourselves, will we speak out against racism, ethnicism, xenophobia, genocide and many issues affecting us both on local and international level. Make governments listen to ordinary people's issues. Respect for our cultures and minority groups.

Our freedom came with the release of Nelson Mandela and other political leaders, the unbanning of the African National Congress in 1990. That is when our new dreams came to be. We had to fight violence that were the last kicks of the dying apartheid, and that was seen as Black on Black violence, that was to discredit everything fought for.

The resistance of the nineties, that was after apartheid was crushed, to realise our dream for fair, peaceful and democratic elections. The violence was threatening that dream, the churches, civil society, youth, women, politicians and every individual and groups that believe in that dream were all trying to find solution to the carnage that nearly destroyed us as black people of this country.

After the violence we had to pick up the pieces. Our young people who were in the forefront of defending the communities were left with nothing to do. There were no jobs and so no food, no recreational facilities, no schooling, no trauma centres to deal with what they have done. More women burnt inside their homes, elders particularly women accused of witchcraft and burnt alive. The pain and suffering caused a lot of mental disorders, denial, shame and guilt. And others still harboured their feelings, never talked about their roles and sometime you feel like you are a time bomb because you don't know what will happen if the person cracks. The denial and shame of acceptance of some of the atrocities like rape and the live with a fear of HIV/AIDS by both the perpetrators and victims still creates animosities in our communities. For our communities to heal and for us to rewrite our history, the imbalances, the pain and suffering of our women and men, the breaking down of our communities, the return of land and our economy need to be addressed. Human rights violation should be the thing of the past. We must feel free in our country, we must fight poverty, HIV/AIDS, crime and many of the evil things that are facing us as a country.

My vision and dream is a free country, houses for all, jobs for all, most of all bring the dignity of the majority people that have been dehumanised in their own country of birth. We want our value systems *ubuntu* to return to our communities and our country.

I thank you for this opportunity. The struggle for freedom of women continues and we have to continue until the last country in the world has freed women.



## We have to forge new definitions of manhood from all our fathers for all our sons

Expert Witness testimony on Exterminating the Other  
*Pregs Govender, South Africa*



So often we have sat silently  
With our grief, our horror, our pain, our anger, our  
hopelessness  
Our despair at how successfully we have been  
disembodied.

So we live and speak, no longer conscious of our  
wholeness, our connectedness  
We have begun to believe we are fragments  
That our stories are disconnected from each other's.

The enemy sits safely ensconced within our minds  
and within our hearts and none of us escapes.

This Court is a moment of connection to remind us we are a movement and we have power.  
Yes - even in a world where the U.S. spends \$ 280 billion on military expenditure - 37% of world  
expenditure of \$ 798 billion.  
Today our countries have joined in, with the steepest rise last year being Africa with an increase of 37%  
between 1998 and 2000, on military expenditure.

In a world where Americans soldiers sing *This is my rifle, this is my gun. This is for fighting, this is for fun* and  
under Sergeant Daly raped and tortured children and women and killed an entire village in the Mai Lai  
atrocities in Vietnam.

A world in which, during the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the US Government initially denied, then later  
admitted that bomber pilots on aircraft carriers in the Gulf were deliberately shown films of violent  
pornography, before taking off on missions over civilian areas in Iran.

A world where in Thenjiwe Mtintso's words at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's special women's  
hearings of the TRC "*As women speak, they speak for us who are too owned by pain to speak. Because always,  
always in anger and frustration, men use women's bodies as a terrain of struggle.... Behind every encounter with  
the police lurked the possibility of sexual abuse and rape. Your sexuality was used to strip away your dignity; to  
undermine your sense of self - fallopian tubes were flooded with water until they burst. Rats were pushed into  
vaginas.*"





A world where, what the apartheid police did to you, was done a million times over by rapists and batterers, both stranger and the beloved, throughout this land and across our planet.

South Africa's patriarchal, capitalist and racist regime succeeded in silencing and keeping invisible, its horrific effects on over half our population. The endless dirge - we do not hear our own voices, we do not see our own faces.

*"As women speak, they speak for us who are too owned by pain to speak. Because always, always in anger and frustration, men use women's bodies as a terrain of struggle.... Behind every encounter with the police lurked the possibility of sexual abuse and rape. Your sexuality was used to strip away your dignity; to undermine your sense of self - fallopian tubes were flooded with water until they burst. Rats were pushed into vaginas."*

So we deal in the machismo - the death cards of the arms merchants, which the white generals brought in 1994 and the ANC rejected. A nation's money that belongs to the babies with kwashiorkor in the Eastern Cape, to those who are raped and battered, that belongs to the poor - to the homeless and the landless, and the growing numbers of unemployed, to those - often our youngest, that HIV-AIDS stalks to the death.

I know that in our hearts we cannot have forgotten who we are. That in our hearts we cannot rubbish our collective dream and vision and the love that inspired courage across our land. Today is another battle - with the patriarch within our minds and his power of fear and hate; his hierarchies of exclusion, invisibility, silence; *his memory of forgetting*.

We have to forge new definitions of manhood from all our fathers for all our sons. We have to rewrite Herstory and History. We have to reclaim ourselves. So collectively we can reclaim our power of love and courage.



At the first Court I shared a poem I wrote in celebration. I share part of it today.

*The colonisers of the world - of Europe, Africa, Asia, America, Australia  
Found people who honoured in worship, the earth and all its creatures  
The sky, the stars, the moon, each other.*

*The knowledge that women and other colonised people of the world have had  
Of the earth, of dance, of song, of creativity, of healing, of nurturing, of wildness  
Is spat upon and burnt at the stake.*

*We have learnt eventually to uphold the patriarchy  
To build the walls and imprison our sisters, our mother, our daughters, ourselves,  
To teach of limitations, to clip our wings and our clitorises.*

*To conclude with the patriarch in teaching our brothers, our sons, our fathers  
to lock up their hearts and shed no tears as they learn how to kill.*

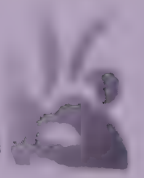
*The time has come to light up all the parts of ourselves  
We have kept hidden in fear and shame and ambiguity.  
To hear our voices from deep within  
Its drumbeat making us dance the dance of creation of ancient cultures now decimated.*

*A dance of creation  
Above the sterile, divided discourse of religion, politics, and medieval science.  
To realise the knowledge beyond a hundred thousand colonisation's.*

*To see the fear that drives religious wars, witch-hunts, genocides, slavery, racism, apartheid,  
xenophobia...*

*We can live beyond the false dichotomies... of body verses soul,  
black as evil and white as pure goodness,  
heaven above and hell below*





### *Statement of the Jury*

## Colonisation has contaminated the idea of normality, sanity, rationality, reason and progress in our times

Ashis Nandy, India



*We* have spent almost an entire day hearing the testimonies from all around the world. It has been for us - as it must have been for most listeners - a learning experience to end all learning experiences. But it has certainly not been a pleasant day. For what we have heard and seen today—from the witnesses, the victims, the survivors, the scholars and the documentary film-makers researching human inhumanity towards humans, and the resisters who have fought over the centuries against heavy odds for freedom, their own and that of the others.

Before this array of extraordinary human beings, we are forced to be humble and self-reflective. We are forced to acknowledge the complicity of many ideas, ideologies and faiths that have been our favourite and have been silent in the face of blatant exploitation and oppression, often in the face of unalloyed sadism. Particularly so because most violence has been perpetrated in the name of lofty causes—Christianity, Hinduism or Islam; development and other forms of progress; revolutions and national glory; and civilisation. The following reflections are, therefore, being offered on behalf of the Jury with much humility and tentativeness. I am sure that everyone of the Jury could have given his or her version of the story and they would have been remarkably different. We have confronted during the day a very large slice of life. It looks even larger because the testimony has covered parts of the world that have till now been relatively inaccessible to the civilised world and the great cosmopolitan cultures in the name of which, in the first place the violence and the expropriation was organised and institutionalised.

Perhaps the single greatest contribution of this court of hearing has been to draw attention to one of the great political and cultural paradoxes of our times, a paradox that has remained mostly unrecognised. While we have become aware of the oppression and violence that has been the lot of a large section of humankind, especially in the South, we have sought salvation for the oppressed and the violated in the theories, worldviews and values of the oppressors and the violent. That is what pragmatism and realism are all about in our times, we are told and we obediently believe.

Can there be another kind of realism? Can there be another form of globalisation? After all this trial, too, was global in scope. The testimonies given today in the *World Court of Women Against Racism* suggest that victimisation can also bond individuals and peoples, they too can forge, what can be called, an uncomfortable and unpopular form of globalism. Exactly as violence can cross national, geographical and cultural boundaries, the experience of, and resistance to violence -and victimisation—too crosses boundaries and can cement a cross-cultural and cross-national alliance. The testimonies we have heard today also suggest that direct experience of victimisation can confer an especial status on the victims, for that experience itself can serve as a baseline for a different understanding of violence and oppression. That baseline may or may not be accessible to those who claim to speak on behalf of the victims or those who operate on the basis of standardised theories of violence and oppression, however well-meaning or selfless.



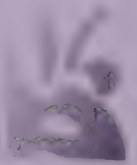


I hope the organisers of the Court will forgive me for pointing out that the *Court of Women* has always had, within its procedural logic, elements of the standard ideas of a *proper* judicial process—reasonably impartial juries, testimonies that can be challenged, rigorously and meticulously collected data, and expert witnesses. Our experiences in South Africa have subverted our ideas of a people's court and what should transpire in it. No conventional court allows juries to applaud testimonies, stand up and join the listeners in the court in singing and dancing. But then, this was no conventional court, guided by conventional ideas of respectability and juridical *balance*. The hearings in the Court were simultaneous means of sharing experiences of suffering that have often remained unrecognised for decades, if not centuries, and celebrating the survival of human resilience and resistance under unbelievable odds. It was as if the Court was unwittingly operating according to the traditional Vedic concept of the witness, *sakshi*, which combines the idea of testifying to and for larger trans-social forces and the divine, and is also supposed to be the more impersonal, concerned observer within each of us, who can stand witness against ourselves too.

*The witnesses also often directly spoke of the loss of voice and self-confidence and about the implosion of selves in the colonised societies. These are societies where even those speaking of emancipatory or transformative politics cannot often establish communication with those they seem so keen to emancipate*

Probably this is only appropriate. The witnesses, the experts and the jury in the *Court of Women* were aware that colonialism has contaminated the ideas of normality, sanity, rationality, reason and progress in our times. Each of these is now a poisoned word. These words have systematically justified, for about five hundred years, unbelievable and inhuman atrocities on large parts of the world and the deliberate destruction of hundreds of rich, complex cultures with their unique systems of knowledge and artistic self-expression. Often so successfully that the victims have been left with no means of articulating their suffering in their own cultural idiom. They are forced to borrow their categories and language of protest from their oppressors in the northern world. They learn to see the European Enlightenment as the last word on human emancipation and sometimes the internalisation of the Enlightenment values as their own path to liberation. Often the forces within the dominant global system of political economy and culture themselves push the same line, for the sake of the transparency that the new global political economy requires and as a means of teaching the unteachable, the basics of adequate civil life. This is probably what some of the testimonies hinted at, when they talked of the colonisation of mind. For the witnesses did not probably have in mind only what many doctoral dissertations in respectable universities emphasise: the gradual spread and internalisation of European values and criteria of judgement in Africa, Asia and South America. The witnesses also often directly spoke of the loss of voice and self-confidence and about the implosion of selves in the colonised societies. These are societies where even those speaking of emancipatory or transformative politics cannot often establish communication with those they seem so keen to emancipate. It is well known that this other colonialism—the one that colonises minds—survives the demise of colonialism and in fact thrives in postcolonial Afro-Asian and South American nation-states where an entire social stratum has been created that seems designer-made to legitimately dominate political and intellectual life in society.





The testimonies given here range from victims of slavery to nuclear experimentation on unsuspecting, indigenous Pacific islanders; from forms of development that constitute virtually invisible genocide to planned sex slavery in the service of an imperial army. In many cases, the oppression and the violence was not random or one-time, they were systematic, institutionalised and chronic. As the chronicle of a rape victim put it, rape acquires a different cultural colouration when not only is one raped repeatedly, as a matter of course, but when one has also seen one's mother and daughter raped, once again as a matter of course, and when one is aware that one's grandmother was raped, too.

These testimonies on violence, oppression and mega-deaths make us wonder if we should not sometimes underplay our concepts of *ideal* societies—the utopias that often guide our action and social interventions. Such testimonies can be devastatingly anti-visionary and anti-utopian. They force us to lower our sights to talk of a humane society where small degrees of inequity and deprivation have to be tolerated in the short run—to ensure the minimum rights of people against arbitrary executions, police and military atrocities, rapes, arbitrary arrests, deliberately inflicted indignities, and throttling voices of victims and dissenters through censorship. No one can work for his or her vision of a desirable society until the immediate threats to a minimally decent society decline. In many societies, it appears, oppression in everyday life has overshadowed memories of historical injustices and even genocides. In some other societies, on the other hand, threats of genocides and other forms of organised mass violence have become modes of everyday self-expression of people living with vague, unfocussed anger, looking for easy targets, because they do not know or recognise who or what has devastated their lives or sucked all meaning out of them.

Such societies have found out that today's victims can be tomorrow's oppressors and yesterday's conquerors can be today's conquered, that conquests of bodies may not always go with conquests of mind, though often they do. Such societies have also found out that when yesterday's victims become today's rulers, they sometimes faithfully replicate the system they have experienced. When they fail to replicate the system, they replay its social Darwinist slogans with same touch of self-confidence. Often even the language in which violence and expropriation is justified in the new regime is itself borrowed from one's erstwhile tormentors. To give one instance, though roughly four-fifth of the victims of organised violence in the last hundred years have been killed by their own states, every oppressed minority still dreams of their own nation-state, conforming to the same concepts of governance, including management of ethnic and religious differences, and international relations.

However, this trial has itself, self-consciously or otherwise, toyed with alternatives that to many in the contemporary world may look strange or esoteric. One of the witnesses opened her remarks by invoking her ancestral spirits and pleaded with them to speak through her, so that she could speak the truth. She was probably intuitively trying to move out of the colonial mode of knowledge and break the mould of conventional academic concepts of objectivity. The testimonies in this public hearing in *World Court of Women Court Against Racism* did suggest that we must gather our strength and the self-confidence to invoke without diffidence not merely our ancestors, but also our gods and goddesses, our mystics and shamans, even our grandparents and village elders, to experiment with new modes of reasoning and radical, transformative politics. Nobody and no community is only poor and oppressed. Everyone has myths, stories, cuisine, music, dances, systems of healing, vocation. Everyone at least has parents and grandparents who tell stories and know women and men who share and transmit memories that bypass or defy official histories. The Court became aware, through its proceedings—on the sufferings that racism in its myriad incarnations in politics, society and knowledge have brought about in recent centuries—that these surviving memories, stories, ballads, legends and epics constitute a repertoire of technologies of resistance with immense possibilities.

On behalf on the jury, I thank the participants for their patience and forbearance in sharing and re-experiencing this long record of human cruelty towards other human beings and nature. We hope something of the anguish of those who have taken the witness stand today rubs off on us in the jury, on the audience, and on those who have continued to see such suffering as a necessary blood sacrifice at the alter of future human welfare and progress.



## Reflections

*It was wonderful being in South Africa. It was wonderful being in Cape Town. It was wonderful being with women in the World Court of Women against War, for Peace in March 2001.*

*It was strengthening and empowering to be with the women. Though victimised they are constantly attempting to regain their honour and dignity and are struggling with hope to establish justice.*

*On March 5, when we entered the Robben Island, where Mr. Nelson Mandela lived a life of hope and courage for 18 years, it was a moving and touching experience. Though it was my third opportunity to step into the Island, every time I enter the Island the experience is something new and different. This time the spirit of reconciliation with justice really struck me. The spirit of resilience, which keeps the South Africans going, is simply amazing.*

*The official opening of the Roundtable on March 6 at the Old Assembly Chamber Parliament of South Africa brought new inspiration to the whole Court. Women from all over the world sat in that very parliament where the whites sat and ruled the blacks. But now it is the blacks, especially the women who comprise 29% of the parliament, who sent energy waves throughout the chamber.*

*All of us experienced solidarity and support when we all came together at the civic centre in black dress, as a worldwide movement of women against violence and for peace. Only women could do this. There was life, there was energy, and there was solidarity.*

*International Women's Day 2001 was remarkable. More than three thousand women and the jury sat together from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. at a stretch, trying to understand the roots of wars and make war unthinkable at the Oliver Tambo Centre.*

*The inauguration of the Court of Women was something I can never forget. The drummers were all there with the message that weapons spare nobody, not even the unborn child; there is no limit to the destruction that weapons create, the severe abuse and exclusion of women, violation of women's rights, loss of women's lives. But at the same time the drummers stood firm and hopeful.*



*The World Court was an opportunity for women to understand and accept that they are not only victims of violence but also a very part of the struggle for human dignity. Therefore, they need to rise from oppressive situations and assert their presence. They need to dream of a future without violence, build new hopes, new resistance, identify evils, and grow in the power of self-expression.*

*Yes, the South Africans made racism unthinkable. So it is our duty and responsibility to learn from them the courage to dream and hope for a violence free society.*

*It was a spiritual experience for me to have listened to the black women's struggle for liberation as women and liberation as a nation. During the struggle, young women and children were brutally killed; many starved, or worked as domestic servants. They were not allowed to meet their husbands who went in search of jobs. Yet they all stood for truth. They worked underground, keeping up the spirit by singing. The light of hope was burning amidst torture.*

*It was a good learning experience for me to see that women are not victims but are being victimised, and women have the ability to withstand the onslaught, the courage to say that we will never tolerate the injustice done to humanity and especially to women. We will see that it will never be repeated. We will never accept the violence forced on us. We will speak out. We will speak out on behalf of the voiceless and assert ourselves.*

*We want our histories be told to the younger generation in the textbooks. We want a future full of peace with justice and justice without revenge. It is the oppressed people who give us new hope and strength. We need to build and reconstruct from the ashes of destruction. This is the only hope we have in favour of the oppressed. The energies of women are all over the world and we dream of a violence free world.*

*The brilliance of patriarchy is to create power and consolidate power over and over again. It converts every area into a war zone and creates new forms of wars. In this context we also have to realise that life is not an invention to be patented, and we will not allow any one to rob us of our lives.*

Jyothi Raj, REDS, India

## Reflections

*To be part of the World Court of Women against War, For Peace was for us a life altering experience. We are well aware of the increasing brutality of violence against women. We are also aware that women are fighting against this onslaught. But to see it being done in such a caring way was an eye opener for us.*

*We were inspired by the strong women who have survived such horrendous acts – from the Lola's who always smiled at us despite the sad stories, to the moving testimony of Christine. It is an experience we will never forget and a moment in history we are proud to have been part of.*

*Thank you for bringing the Court of Women to South Africa and inspiring us. Thank you for letting us be part of this process, we will never forget the experience.*

*We are still laughing about the illegal protest we had in Cape Town. There was no training for being marshals at this specific event. We managed to control the crowd on the one side, but every time we looked across the road we could see that chaos was about to break loose. Our comrades were struggling to control part of the crowd and that was quite funny.*

*Being part of this initiative has made us stronger. We started to operate as a group. Ten of us, mostly those who volunteered at the World Court, met on a weekly basis. We had about four sleepovers at the Gender Equity Unit, attended different events and got all the support from Vanessa Ludwig and Mary Hames in her absence.*

*It was on going back to campus after the Court that the idea of starting UWC women's support network, which focuses on violence against women first was discussed. We were very excited and hyped up even though we were extremely tired when we started discussing it. It is now a reality, we meet regularly, have access to an office and infrastructure support at the Gender Equity Unit and we are determined to make a difference- to be part of the movement of women against war, for peace.*

*As a group we volunteered for the Peace Jam Conference 2001 in Cape Town where we acted as mentors to high school pupils; we also volunteered as facilitators for the Peace Academy against Racism, which took place in April 2001 in Cape Town.*

*We are attending seminars on various issues when we have access to money for traveling, and most of the time we carry our bags and wear our orange sweaters. Everyone who was part of the conference in Cape Town will be proud to know that a new and younger group of women have benefitted from this event. All we are trying to do is to live up to the role models and to remember the testimonies and roundtables we have been exposed to. We can assure you that the next World Court initiative to be held in South Africa will be organised by our group. We are the new women leaders that the World Court has produced.*

*We are not only fighting an economic battle but also a struggle to be respected as women and not made to believe that to organise as women is a sin. It is so nice to speak out and say, "stop the rape" and with rape we include both physical and emotional rape. As women we are made to believe that we are bad, that it is wrong to organise. It can never be wrong to speak out and that is what our group is trying to achieve, to organise with our fellow sisters. We refer to each other as "sister" and if we want to make a point we call each other "soul sister". Do not forget we have been baptised as "Orange Girls". If we bump into each other on campus we shout as loud as possible "Orange Girl!!"*

*For those who missed out on the event, you missed out on an experience of a lifetime. We will never be exposed to the same event at the same venues. The people will change, but most of all, the knowledge can never be the same.*

*From Alice, Zinhle, Bianca, Elize, Tumi, Jerry, Bonita, Nozuko, Nuhle, Bontle and Ana (Student volunteers during the World Court of Women against War, for Peace)*



*I am Woman...*

*Who will take this path to self-discovery?  
And who will aid me across troubled waters.*

*And when the sun sets,  
And darkness closes in,*

*Who will be the one to lead me to the light?  
And persuade me against skittish flight.*

*Who will act brave?  
When... the coward in me sets in.*

*And when it's time to fight.  
Who will take up arms for me?  
And battle with all their might.*

*Who will bury my loved ones?  
Who! But I will bleed?*

*...And when the children of a nation seeks  
succor,  
Who will be willing to give aid?*

*I will... for I am woman*

*Stronger? I do not need.  
Braver? I do not see.  
Wiser? There is none, wiser than me.*

*The spirit of mankind is bonded to me,  
Even though no one else is,  
Willing,  
Prepared,  
Able,  
Or equipped... to see,  
That I... am... woman...*

Kaanitah Cassim

## Reflections

*Firstly, it is not a platitude to say the Court changed my life. And I know for a fact that it changed the lives of many of us. Rosalinda from Chiapas came to talk in London about ten days after we were together in Cape Town. As she was speaking, she said (and I'm paraphrasing) that her understanding had grown in the short while since she had left San Cristobel; she had come to tell the world about her reality, the suffering of her people, and the struggle of those communities trying to change from within, but in South Africa and in the UK, she had seen others enduring poverty and oppression. She began to make the connection that this was universal and not unique to her people. As she spoke, she was already stronger, more rooted in her political appreciation; it was beautiful to hear.*

*This certainty, this knowledge is essential to sustain our strength on this voyage.*

*I feel more and more convinced of the need for a European court, the South in the North, the South in our hearts, there are stories hidden here, stories to make our eyes bleed, our hearts sick. We who live in the belly of the beast must acknowledge that our silence, our complicity, has spawned the beast and suckled it.*

*Every day, I feel uplifted when I imagine the positive effects that a Commission on Women's Human Rights would have. That this is perhaps the most fabulous, the most intangible, and the most enormous thing we have ever contemplated in our hearts, should not diminish our courage. There is much to do before we can reap those rewards, though; we must think of language, and representation and our sometimes-conflicting rights and needs. We need to find a way to encompass all our needs and voices, even if we cannot reconcile.*

Joyce Hambling, U.K.

# An Epilogue

*An open letter to the President, United States of America*

30 April, 2002

Mr. President;

The whole world watches Israel's war and the crimes of the Israeli State against the Palestinian people and its leader President Yasser Arafat:  
the killings, the massacres, the *mass graves*  
the war planes, gunships ravaging the towns, cities.  
bullets shattering windows, cars crushed by tanks  
*trees uprooted:*

No water, no food, no medicines:  
No ambulances that can bring the wounded to the hospitals  
No one to take the dead from the streets or from the rubble  
The brutalisation is taking many forms: *the images are there for all to see*  
children terrified, children shot at:  
a people terrorised, *traumatised:*

*There is a war in Palestine*

And Sharon congratulates the Israeli Defense Force on its successes for their courage and intelligence for the Palestinians he says *are running for their lives.*  
and he says that the Israeli Defense Force will continue their military missions until their *mission is completed:*  
And their mission is to destroy the *lives and livelihoods, even lifeworlds and lifevisions* of the Palestinian people:

*This is the genocide of a people.*  
And the world watches almost in silence.

The whole world watches you too; Mr. President:

and the Washington Clique around you, your foreign policy  
a policy designed to divide the world into those who are with you and those against you; good and *evil*;  
civilized and *uncivilised*;  
the evil, the uncivilised are made easily into *terrorist*  
so that the war on terrorism,  
vague as it is, legitimises in public discourse the *state terrorism* of the USA.

Palestine is one more diabolical scene in the Theater of the Absurd:  
in which you play God  
You did it recently in Afghanistan.  
the world's richest country bombing the world's poorest country  
in what it calls *Wars for civilisation:*



On the pretext of finding Osama Bin Laden  
you bombed a whole country and its people  
almost out of existence and persist in continuing with this bombardment:  
Who will bear the costs of your racist war? What about those thousands killed?;  
Who will feed the seven million starving refugees?  
we are talking about *millions of deaths*. Millions:  
*collateral damage* your Administration will say.  
we used *intelligent bombs* as in Iraq  
our wars are *humanitarian interventions* as in Serbia, Kosovo.

The price will be paid by our children and our children's children:  
what will your children's children say to our children's children in another *moment in time*?  
Will history still be written by the *privileged and the powerful*?  
Or will the voices of Ramallah be heard?  
Will the stories of Bethlemlen be told? Will the dead of Jenin speak? Will we ever find those who  
have disappeared? Will Palestine still remain a distant dream?

It will:  
If you do not stop playing God:  
A God who speaks from both sides of his mouth.  
*The violence* you never tire of saying, *must stop on both sides*:  
Both sides, Mr. President?  
One side that has the tanks and the gunships and the latest in weapons and its technology and on  
the other side we see *children with stones*?  
and those who in acts of desperation blow themselves up:  
as someone said a few days ago, suicide bombers are not born, *they are made*:

Perhaps the time has come to ask *why*?  
Why do so many people around the world burn the American flag?  
Why is there so much anger,  
even bitterness about the policies of the USA?  
Why is *revenge* and retaliation, and we think especially of September 11, *your only response*?  
Revenge is destructive, it corrodes; for *violence* is a cycle that *must return to destroy*.

*It is only a matter of time*:

Sharon will not be Prime Minister forever.  
He will be judged in the World Court of the People  
for *war crimes* and for *crimes against humanity*.  
Sabra and Shatila will haunt him:  
Jenin will indict him.

Only history will tell if his friends will be judged too.

You too will not be President for all time  
but you will continue to be a father, perhaps a grandfather.  
As you gather your grandchildren around you  
what stories will you tell them?  
that once upon not-so-long-ago  
when hundreds of Palestinians were being massacred  
you looked away:  
you spoke your double speak:  
you did your political somersaults  
*extermination* was your script  
you had the main actor's role in the Absurd Theater.  
will you tell them that you had no answers except *violent ones*:  
*What will you tell the children?*

Perhaps you should listen to other stories:  
stories that come from the *corners of the Arab streets*:  
stories that come from the *peoples of the South*  
stories that come from *people of conscience* all over the world  
and there are many in your part of the world:  
*stories of courage, and dignity, of harmony and hope.*  
stories that come from the children  
tortured, terrorised, traumatised  
in wars, civilised or uncivilised  
children of the rain, of the sun  
*children of the stars*  
that speak of justice  
because only justice can stop the curse of greed and violence and war  
*only Justice, Mr. President, can stop a curse!*

An Open Letter initiated from El Taller International, signed and sent to the US Embassies by civil society organisations, ngos, human rights groups, lawyers, journalists, doctors, poets, artists, musicians, students and academia in different regions of the world.





## The Courts of Women:

### *The Journey, The Milestones*

*Let us tell you a story of the Courts of Women:*

It was a dream of many years ago. It began in Asia and through the Asian Women's Human Rights Council who with several other women's rights groups has held seven Courts in the Asia Pacific region. It journeyed then to the other regions of the world - Africa, Central America, Arab World - through El Taller International. Sixteen Courts of Women have been held so far all over the world.

The Journey continues.

The first *Court of Women* that was held in Lahore, Pakistan with the Simorgh Collective in December 1993, focused on *domestic violence*, from dowry burning to acid throwing, to *crimes of honour*, to rape and women battering.

The *Court on the Violence of War against Women* was held in Tokyo, Japan in March 1994. It heard the testimonies of women victims of the wars in Asia from the second world war (*comfort women*) to Vietnam, Cambodia, and women survivors of the US military bases in the Pacific. The *comfort women* who were the military sexual slaves of the Japanese army, *broke a silence of almost fifty years*. Why had the world waited so long to hear their story? AWHRC organised this Court in association with sixty four women's human rights groups in Japan.

The *Court of Women on Crimes against Dalit Women* was organised in collaboration Women's Voice in March 1994 in Bangalore, India. The jury in its verdict stated that the rising atrocities against Dalits were crimes against humanity, challenged the fundamental premise of the Indian Constitution stating that it had to be amended in order to confer positive rights.

The *Court of Women on Reproductive Rights and Genetic Engineering* was held during the International Conference on Population in September 1994 in Cairo, Egypt. This Court was held in collaboration with Ubinig, Bangladesh.

The *Court of Women on the Violence of Development* was held in Bangalore, India in January 1995. It brought together testimonies of women who were victims of the development model - dams, displacement and internal refugees, to nuclear reactors and radiation related illnesses, to landless peasants, to Bhopal (the world's worst industrial disaster), to women victims of a growing consumerist culture (e.g. dowry burning, sex trafficking for tourism, etc.). This Court was organised with Vimochana and several other women's groups in India.

The *Court of Women on Trafficking* was held in Kathmandu, Nepal in June 1996 and focused on the increasing trafficking of women in South Asia. The court provided a forum for women who have been affected by the violence of trafficking to speak and challenge the role played by the law social policy, cultural taboos, economic structures and media in perpetrating the oppressive conditions under which they are forced to live.

In Beijing, with over one hundred women's human rights organizations from all over the world, the AWHRC held the *World Court of Women on Violence against Women* in Huairou, at the NGO Conference, September 1995. El Taller, a partner organisation of the AWHRC that initiated Courts of Women in other regions of the world was one of the sponsors of the Court.


In June 1995, El Taller initiated the first *Arab Court of Women*, with women's and human rights organizations in Tunisia and Lebanon. The Court was held in Beirut, Lebanon; and heard the testimonies of women on the *different forms of violence in the Arab World*. Women, victims of war and occupation, fundamentalism and cultural violence (female circumcision, forced feeding, honour crime) spoke of their *pain and survival as also their resistance*. At a subsequent meeting in Morocco, the Arab women decided to set up the *Mahkamet El Nissa (Permanent Court of Women in the Arab World)* and elected a coordinator and a fifteen-member council. El Taller is a member of the Council. In 1998, *Mahkamet El Nissa* held its second Court of Women on *family laws* in the Arab World and plans to hold several Courts in the region.

In the Pacific, together with the Maori Women's Network- The *Nga Wahine Pacifika*, we held the first *Pacific Court of Women* on nuclear issues and land rights. Because of the nuclear testing, nuclear waste dumping and uranium mining in the region, women often give birth to children who are deformed. Mothers in Micronesia give birth to *masses of flesh* that are referred to as the *jelly babies* of Micronesia. The Court was held within the frame of the *fundamental right to life*. What does the right to life mean to the jelly babies of Micronesia and the over sixteen million victims of the nuclear establishment? The Court was held in Aotearoa, New Zealand in September 1999.

El- Taller Africa, together with women's human rights groups in Africa, held a series of workshops on violence against women that led to the Africa Court of Women- *Mahakama Ya Wa Mama Wa Africa* that was held in Nairobi in June 24-26, 1999. The main issue focused on by this Court was poverty and the feminisation of poverty.

The *World Court of Women against War, for Peace* was held on March 8, 2001 in Cape Town, South Africa. The Court comprising of nearly 4000 women and men from different provinces of South Africa and different regions of the world listened to forty women as they spoke their testimonies of pain and power, survival and strength, presenting strong and irrefutable evidence of the *genocidal violence* being perpetrated by the wars of this century; wars of colonisation, globalisation and militarisation.





The Asian Women's Human Rights Council and El Taller international, in collaboration with Civil Societies Coordinating Committee, Durban, Durban Social Forum, University of the Western Cape Women's Support Network, Cape Town, Institute for Black Research, SANGOCO and several other national and international NGO's organised *The World Court for Women against Racism* on August 30, 2001 as part of the NGO forum and the parallel *Pavement Conference*. The *World Court of Women Against Racism*, through the testimonies of women and men victims, survivors and resisters to the different forms and faces of racism, sought to proffer an understanding of and response to the many-layered narratives of the lasting legacy of colonialism.

*The World Court on Refugee and Indigenous Women* was held in Sydney, Australia on December 4, 2001. It brought together refugee and indigenous women to present their stories in the traditional cultural arena of a women's circle. The Court enabled us to challenge the existing human rights paradigm and to explore new ways to ensure that across the world, discrimination and oppression are acknowledged and addressed in all their manifestations. The removal of gender discrimination was acknowledged as a key to a better world for all.

El Taller-Central America together with the Federacion Cuban Mujeres and the Institute of Philosophy and other women's groups in the region held an *International Court of Women on the Economic Blockade* and its effects on women and children. It was an effective attempt to shift the terrain from the *political* to the *humanitarian*. It was also an attempt to document the testimonies of the women and children on the violence of the sanctions. Three Public Hearings in preparation for the Court were also held.

All these Courts are located in the *South*- in the Arab World, in Asia, in Africa. *The Mediterranean Forum on Violence against Women* was the first Court that focused on North/ South issues which included globalisation and poverty, militarisation and war and the issues of sexual violence and rape in situations of war, armed and fundamentalist conflicts; issues of racism, migrant workers and refugees. Our partners for the forum were Crinali from Italy and the Centre for International Listening and other women ngos in Morocco. The Court was held in November 1999.

The Courts of Women are *public hearings* and as a forum for human rights education is proving to be an extremely sensitive and powerful media to reveal the interconnections between the various forms of *personal* and *public* violence against women in different societies and the violence being generated by the new world order. We will continue to critically look at both the mainstream definitions and perceptions of women and violence against women, to seriously reformulate the existing solutions and remedies within the established socio-legal discourses and institutions.

*The Courts of Women share the following objectives:*

1. To understand and to see with *new eyes* the realities of the different forms of violence against women in the region. To attempt a *connectedness* of the different forms of violence, violence which denies women the most fundamental human right of all, *the right to be human*.
2. To deepen and analyse the *roots of violence* against women; to recognise not only the different forms of violence and their *escalation*, but also the *intensification* of the brutal forms the violence against women has taken.
3. To facilitate *dialogue* among women of the region, creating possibilities for exchange among women's and human right's groups and organisations in the region. To foster *solidarity* and concrete action among women's groups, leaders and advocates in the region and to effectively promote women's human rights.
4. To develop and deepen the concepts and categories on human rights; *to extend the human rights discourse from a gender perspective*. To challenge the dominant discourse on human rights recognising its historical, ideological and philosophical moorings.
5. To recognise the *strengths and survival* modes of women against violence in the *dailiness of their lives*, which they have articulated over the years, spontaneously at the individual level and collectively, and in communities.
6. To gather in *conversations across cultures*, the knowledge and wisdoms of women in the world from different cultures, entering into a dialogue of transformation that challenges the dominant world view, breaking new ground, *creating a new discourse*, moving towards *a new political imaginary*.

Each Court receives the testimonies through a Jury, a Council of Wisdom, of wise women and men. The testimonies and judgments that emerge from the Courts of Women.

- a. offer a valuable input into local, national, and international campaigns against the different forms of violence like war and militarisation, racism and racial discrimination, poverty and the *feminisation of poverty*.
- b. serve to generate support from the local and international public for victims and survivors of the violence. It could even be used as a valuable *body of evidence* by groups that wish to seek *redress and reparation* through the national and international legal institutions. For instance the issue *Comfort Women* of Asia that was consistently raised at the UN Commission on Human Rights by the women's human rights groups in Asia demanding acknowledgement of the crimes and redress and compensation.
- c. sensitise governments and the public on the intensifying gender violence and *brutalisation of women*.
- d. contribute to a body of knowledge that will help to question, transform and initiate *alternative institutions and instruments that seek to address the violation of women's human rights* at the regional, national and international level.
- e. by creating new spaces for women's human rights organisations to focus on the issue of violence against women, it contributes to the *strengthening of civil societies* in the region.

*The Courts of Women are our dreams of trespass.*



# Organisations and Networks in Solidarity with the Courts of Women

World Court of Women Against War, For Peace  
Cape Town, South Africa,  
March 6-9, 2001

**ALGERIA:** SOS Femmes en Detresse; Rassemblement Action Jeunesse; Touiza; Association Nationale Pour L'Entraide Paysanne; Dialogue et Action Akbou; Movement Ecologique Algerien; Association Scientifique de l'Agriculture Saharienne. **ARGENTINA:** Mesa de los Suenos; Grupo de Trabajo Borradores; Universidad de Buenos Aires; Catedra Abierta de Estudios Americanistas; PCA -en la Pampa - Miembro de Pueblo Unido. **AUSTRALIA:** Australian National Council for Refugee Women; Australian Federation of University Women. **BANGLADESH:** UBINIG; Resource Intergration Center; Unnayan Shahojgy Team; Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable; Naripokkho. **BENIN:** Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour le Bien; Etre Social. **BOLIVIA:** Voluntarios en Action; Instituto Politecnico "Tomas Katari" IPTK; Centro de Informacion Dessarrolo de la Mujer; Centro de Investigacion y Promocion del Campesinado; Oficina Juridica Para La Mujer. **BURMA :** Movement of Democracy; Lisu Baptist Convention. **BOTSWANA :** The Botswana Center for Human Rights DITSHWANELO. **BELGIUM:** PAX Christi International (PXI); Reseau S/N Network. **BRAZIL:** REDEH; Centro de Atividade Cultural Economica e Sociais. **BOSNIA:** Association 'Zenah Bih'; Zene Zenama. **CAMEROUN:** BERDSO. **CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:** Conseil Inter ONG en Centrafrique. **CONGO:** Collectif des Organisations Non-Gouvernementales pour l'Essor des Communautés de Base en Afrique. **CANADA:** Canadian Council for International Cooperation; International Council for Adult Education; Rights and Democracy; International Institute of Concern for Public Health; Match International Center MIC; The Marquis Project; Intercultural Institute of Montreal; Peacefund Canada. **CAMBODIA:** Gender and Development (GAD/C); Khmer Youth Association; Association de Droits de l'Homme et du Developpement au Cambodge; Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children's Rights; Cooperation Committee for Cambodia. **COLOMBIA:** Fundacion Para la Comunicacion Popular; Asociacion de Trabajo Interdisciplinario; Corporacion Colectivo de Abogados; Corporacion Sociedad Colombiana de Pedagogia; Asociacion de Cabildos del Consejo; Regional indigena del Tolima; Corporacion Para La Participacion; Ciudadana; Universidad Autonoma Latinoamericana. **COSTA RICA:** Fundacion CEPPA. **CUBA:** Instituto de Filosofia; International Court of Women against the Economic Blockade; Federacion de Mujeres Cubanas; Universidad de Oriente; Universidad de Las Villas. Dpto de Filosofia; Centro de Intercambio Educacional "Graciela Bustillos". **CHINA:** Beijing Foreign Studies University. **CROATIA:** Center for Women's Studies; Center for Education and Counseling of Women; Zenska INFOTEKA/Women's INFOTEKA; Women's Information and Documentation Center; **DENMARK:** International Council on Social Welfare; Universidad de Copenhague. **EGYPT:** Women's Progressive Union; The Arab ngo network for Environment and Development; CCFD; Omdurman Centre for Women Studies; Appropriate Communication Techniques; Legal Research and Resource Centre for Human Rights; Arab Research Center for Afro-Arab Studies and Documentation; South Group for Research; Ford Foundation. **EL SALVADOR:** Equipo Malz. **ECUADOR:** Agencia Latinoamericana de informacion. **ETHIOPIA:** Anchor Intergrated Development; International Institute of Rural Reconstruction. **FIJI:** Fiji Council of Social Services. **FRANCE:** Catholic Committee Against Hunger for Development; Foundation Abbe Pierre Pour Le Logement Des Defavorises. **GERMANY:** Nuclear Free Future; Evangelische Zentralstelle Entwicklungshilfe E.V. **GHANA:** International Needs; The African Development Programme; Youth Development Foundation; Action Aid. **GUINEA:** Association Guineenne pour l'Allegement des Charges Feminines. **HAWAII:** Na Koaa Ikaika o Ka Lahui; Nga Wahine Pacifica. **HONG KONG:** Zi Teng Association; Asian Human Rights Commission. **HUNGARY:** Kozossegefjeleztok Egyesulete Association for Community Development.



**HONDURAS:**Comite para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CODEH). **INDIA :** Asian Women's Human Rights Council ; Vimochana ; CIEDS Collective ; SANGRAM ; Narmada Bachao Andolan ; Women's Voice; Women's Centre ; Vacha; Sparrow ; ISST; Mobility India; Joint Women's Programme; Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative; WAADS/ Positive Women's Network; Chattisgarh Mahila Mukti Morcha Samithi; Communalism Combat; VAMP; Anweshi Women's Counseling Centre ; Rural Education for Development Society; Sanchetana ; RFSTE; Grameen Vikas Karyakram; North East Network; Society for Community Organization Trust; Ahmedabad Women's Action Group; DEEPALAYA; Bal Rashmi Society; ICSW; Initiative Women in Development; Bhagwati Environment Development Institute (BEDI) Peace Trust; Center for Science and Environment; All India Drug Action Network; Reaching Out; FEDINA; Visthaar; Narmada Solidarity Forum; Women's Studies, UTC; SAHRWARU; Kerala Stree Vedhi; Sabrang Communications and Publication; Other Media; Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy; Roshni; Action Aid; United Nations Development Programme; Ford Foundation. **INDONESIA:** Indonesian National Commission on Violence against Women; Gandhi Ashram; Bali Canti Sena. **ITALY:** Instituto Universitario Orientale-IUO-Napoli Fondazione Rispetto et Parita **IRAQ:** Al-Amal Iraqi Association; Iraqi Women's League. **IVORY COAST:** Mouvement International des Femmes Democratizes MIFED. **JAPAN:** Hidankyo - Japan Confederation of A and H Bomb Sufferers Organisation; Japan Gensuikyo-Japan Council against A and H Bombs; Citizen's Fund for Redress; Plan International Japan; Sotoshu Volunteer Association; International Education Resource and Innovation Center; Pacific Asia Resource Centre. **JORDAN:** Jordanian Women's Union; The Arab Thought Forum; Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center. **JERUSALEM:** Women in Black **KENYA:** Horn Relief; Green Belt Movement; Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA). **KUWAIT:** Women Cultural and Social Society **KOSOVO:** Center for Protection of Women and Children; Ministry of Democracy. **LEBANON:** American University of Beirut; Secours Populaire Libanais; Amel Association Lebanese Association for Popular action; Mouvement Social; Ligue des Droits de la Femme Libanaise; Lebanese Working Women League; Union de la Jeunesse Democratique Libanaise; National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training; The Lebanese Women Democratic Gathering RDFL; Mahkamet El Nissa. **MALASIA:** Aliran; Third World Network. **MALAWI:** Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation. **MALI:** Association Subaahi Gumo; Association du Sahel d'Aide a la Femme et a l'Enfance; El Gandal. **MAURITIUS :** The Call Organization for Community Development and the Protection of the Environment; Mauritius of Social Services. **MOROCCO :** Association de Solidarite Feminine; Centred'Ecoule et d'Orientation Psychologique pour Femmes Agressees; Union de l'Action Feminine. **MEXICO :** Equipo Pueblo; El Colegio de Mexico; Centre of Asian and African Studies; Universidad Mesoamericana; "Horizontes Valeologicos" ACs; Catedra "Paulo Freire" -ITESO; Universidad Autonoma de Guerrero, Escuela de Filosofia y Letras; Sociedad Co. De Trabajadores Aparejos Electricos; Centro de Estudios Superiores del Comportamiento A.C.; Benemerita Universidad Autonoma de Puebla; Equipo Mujeres en Accion Solidaria. **MAURITANIA:** ONG ESPOIR; Institut Merieme Diallo; Association Femmes Enfants Developpement; Club des Amis de la Nature et la Protection de l'Environnement. **NICARAGUA:** Programa Feminista Centroamericano La Corriente. **NETHERLANDS:** Migratie; Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights; SAWA; Ministry of Development Cooperation. **NEPAL:** Oxfam; Children at Risk Network Group; AATWIN. **NIGER:** Nouvelle Oportunité pour les Defavorises. **NIGERIA:** Centre for Conflict Resolution and Peace Advocacy. **NORWAY:** Anti Racist Center **PHILIPPINES:** LILA PILIPINA; Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement; Women's Rights Movement of the Philippines; Philippines Zontas Foundation; Harnessing Self-Reliant Initiatives and Knowledge inc; Task Force Detainees of the Philippines; Cooperation Foundation Phil., INC; Buhay Foundation for Women and Girl Child; National Council of Women of the Philippines; Roots for Equity; Asian Indigenous Women's Network; Tebtebba - Indigenous People's International Center for Policy Research and Education; Asian Women's Human Rights Council. **PALESTINE:** MIFTAH; Palestine Human Rights Information Center; Palestinian Youth Union; Palestinian Legislation Council; Gaza Community mental Health Programme; Bisan Centre for Research and Development; Al-Haq; Association for Rural Development (ARD); The Palestinian Center for Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development; Beladna Cultural Center Society for the Protection and Development of the Environment; Al Manhal Woman and Child Cultural Center. **PAKISTAN:** RAWA; Simorgh Women's Collective. **PANAMA:** Legal Assistance Popular Center. **PERU:** PRATEC; Servicios Educativos Promocion y Apoyo Rural. **PUERTO RICO:** CASEP, Taller de Educacion Alternativa; Universidad de Puerto Rico. **REPUBLICA DOMINICANA:** Fundacion Solidaridad, INC. **RWANDA:** Association of Widows of Genocide; Forum des ONG Rwandaises; Association Rwandaise pour la Promotion de l'Environnement Hygiene et Sante; Association pour la Developpement Rural du Bukunzi; Collectif des Liges et Associations de Defense des Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda; Association Rwandaise pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme. **RUSSIA:** The Committee of 'Soldiers' Mothers of Russia.



**SOUTH AFRICA:** African National Congress Women's League; African Gender Institute; Commission on Gender Equality; Biomatch; Gender Advocacy Programme; Siyabuswa Educational Improvement and Development Trust; Social Change Assistance Trust; El Taller - South Africa; Mahakama Ya Wamama Wa Afrika; Human Rights Commission; Desmond Tutu Foundation; Network on Violence against Women; Rape Crisis; Dept of Social Services; Black Sash; City of Cape Town Metropolitan Council; Cape Town Holocaust Center; Boland Forum; Women on Farms; Trauma center for victims of violence; CAFDA; Call to action campaign; Dept of Justice; Centre for Conflict resolution; IDASA; AFRICON; South Africa Arts Council; Big Issue; Carehaven Shelter; Sisters Incorporated shelters; CATTS; Advice Desks; Child Welfare Society; Community Chest; Community Law Center; Gun Free South Africa; NICRO; Lifeline - crisis line; Congress of South Africa Trade Union; Community Workers Forum; Molo Songololo; RAPCAN; Committee on the Status of Women; Mediawatch; Dept of Labour; Malobongwe Womens Development; Quaker Peace Centre; Truth and Reconciliation Commission; ENGEN; United Sanctuary; Woolworths; Department of Arts and Culture; Gender equity unit - University of the western cape; Cape Technikon; Cape College; Dept on Community Health; FAMSA; DELTA; Femina; LEAP; Law, Race and Gender Institute; Maryland Literacy Project; Mosaic; New Women's Movement; Disabled People South Africa; New World Foundation; Peace Africa Youth Centre; SACTU; UMAC; Triangle Project; Women's legal Center; Umtapo Peace Center; St. Anne's Home; Catholic Welfare and Development Trust; De Beers; British Council; Illitha Labantu; Provincial Networks on Violence against Women; Trust for Community Outreach; Interfund; KAGISO; Rural Women's Development; Philani; Saartjie Baartman Women's Center; SCAT; Speakers of the National Parliament and National Council of Provinces; ANC Parliamentary Caucus; National Development of Social Welfare; Provincial Administration of the Western Cape - Department of Social Services; Cape Times; Alliance Francais; CWCI Fund; European Union; Department of Justice and Constitutional Affairs; Cora Weiss; National Arts Council of South Africa; Woolworths; Shell. **SIERRA LEONE:** Council of Churches. **SPAIN:** Mujeres de Negro; "ES CALIU" (ONG); Departamento de Sociologia (Universidad de la Laguna); Justicia I Pau. **SOMALIA:** Bari Women Confederation Bosasa. **SENEGAL:** Rencontre Africaine Pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme RADDHO; Environment et Developpement du Tiers-Monde Enda-TM; Action Humaine pour le Developpement Integre au Senegal AHDIS. **SRILANKA:** Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya; Community Trust Fund. **SYRIA:** Syrian Women's League to Protect Childhood and Motherhood. **SWAZILAND:** Swaziland Action Group against Abuse. **SWITZERLAND:** World Council of Churches; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland. **SUDAN:** Al Manar. **THAILAND:** Foundation for Women; Migrant Assistance Programme; GAATW. **TUNISIA:** El Taller; University of Tunisia; Association de Developpement et de Protection de l'Environnement La Marsa; Association Tunisienne des Femmes Democratrices; Enda Inter Arabe; Association pour la Protection de la Nature et de l'Environnement; Ligue Tunisienne pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme; Association de Protection de la Nature et de l'Environnement Sfax; Association El Mourouj II; Association les Amis des Oiseaux Faculte des Sciences, Campus Universitaire; Club Jeunes Science Hamman Lif; Oxfam-Quebec; RAID; Institut Arabe des Droits de l'Homme; Association des Meres Celibataires; Amnesty International (Section Tunisie); CAWTAR; Organization Tunisienne de l'Education et de la Famille; AFTURD. **TANZANIA:** Center pour l'Education et la Defense des Droits de l'Homme. **TOGO:** Association pour la Promotion des Groupements Agricoles. **UKRAINE:** Flowers of Wormwood. **URUGUAY:** Catolicas or El Derecho a Decidir; Mujer Ahora-Espacio Feminista de Salud; SELF MANAGEMENT. **UNITED KINGDOM:** SEEDS; Action Aid. **USA:** The Group for Cultural Documentation; Kensington Welfare Association; UUSC; Women Environment and Development Organization; International Center for Law in Development; Global Nonviolent Peaceforce; Council on International and Public Affairs; Towson University; Philosophy Department, Edinboud University; Comision para las Mujeres de la Ciudad de Cambridge; Department of Philosophy, University of San Diego; Unitarian Universalist Service Society; Samuel Rubin Foundation; Vaughan Foundation; Board of Global Ministries. **VIETNAM:** Vietnam Women's Union Research Center for Gender, Family and Environment in Development. **REPUBLIC OF YEMEN:** Cultural Development Projects Planning Foundation; Human Rights and Training Center. **YUGOSLAVIA:** University of Belgrade; Laci Balla Lajos. **ZIMBABWE:** Organization of Rural Associations for Progress; Zimbabwe Women's Resource Center and Network.



**World Court of Women Against Racism  
NGO Forum, World Conference Against Racism,  
Racial Discrimination,  
Xenophobia and Related Intolerance  
Durban, South Africa  
Aug 30, 2001**

Asian Women's Human Rights Council  
El Taller International

in association with:

Civil Society Activities Coordinating Committee, Durban, South Africa; Institute for Black Research; University of Natal; Concerned Citizens Forum; South African NGO Coalition; Durban Social Forum; National Land Commission; Anti-Privatisation Forum; South African Civic Organization; Anti-Racism Initiative; Palestinian Support Committee; University of the Western Cape Women Support Network, Cape Town, South Africa; National Land Committee; Gender Equity Unit, UWC; Chairperson, Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women; South Africa NGO Coalition, SANGOCO; New Women's Movement, South Africa; Africa National Congress Women's League; Inkatha Women's Brigade; ENDA – Third World, Sénégal, Environnement et Développement du Tiers-Monde Enda – TM; Center for Women's Studies, Croatia; Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement; PRATEC, Peru; Migrante, Netherlands/Morocco; Equipo Pueblo, Mexico; Zene Zenama, Bosnia; MIFTAH, Palestine; Institute of Philosophy, Cuba; Na Koa Ikaka O Ka Lahui Hawaii; Group for Cultural Documentation, USA; Tebtebba Foundation, Indigenous, Philippines; Federacion de Ubanas Mujeres, Cuba; Tangata Wheuna, Aotearoa, NZ; National Federation of Daliths, India; Buraku Liberation League, Japan; Rroma Center for Public Policies, Aven Amentza, Romania; Slavehouse, Goree Island, Senegal; Arid Land Institute, Kenya; Association of Korean Human Rights in Japan; Citizens for Environmental Justice, USA; Nga Wahine tiaki o te Ao, Aotearoa, NZ; Circumpolar Peoples, Denmark; Accion Ecological, Ecuador; Indigenous Peoples Council on Bio-colonialism, USA; Rassemblement Action Jeunesse, Algeria; Women of Color Resource Center, USA; Jerusalem Media Communication Center, Palestine; BALADNA, Association for Arab Youth, Palestine 1948; LOLAS, Philippines (Lolas Para Sa Kapayapaan at Kumpensasyon); Lila Pilipina, Philippines; Vimochana, India; UBINIG, Bangladesh; Simorgh Women's Collective, Pakistan; Kalyanamitra, Indonesia; Screm Do Mira, Bosnia; Women's Voice, India; Foundation for Women, Thailand; Beijing Foreign Languages University, China; Bali Canti Sena, Indonesia; Australian National Council of Refugee Women; World Council of Churches, Switzerland; Indigenous initiatives for peace, Guatemala; RAWA, Revolutionary Association of Women, Afghanistan; Movement for Democracy, Burma; Center for the Study of Developing Societies, India; Global Youth Connect; Amnesty International, Tunisia; Women in Black, India; Jerusalem Centre for Information, Palestine; UUSC, USA; Palestinian Youth Union, Palestine; SEEDS, United Kingdom; Flowers of Wormwood, Ukraine; HURIGHTS, Osaka, Japan; International Possibilities Unlimited, USA; Omomo Melen Pacific; SANGRAM, India; Center for the Protection of Women and Children, Kosovo; K'hib Women's Peace Center, South Africa; Asian Indigenous Women's Network, Philippines; Panorama Haitadhaman, Tunisia; Indonesian National Commission Against Violence Against Women; Mahakama Ya Wamama Wa Africa, Kenya; Association Tunisienne de la Mere et l'enfant, Tunisia; Union of Lebanese Democratic; Global Alliance Against Trafficking of Women, Thailand; Association Tamaynut-ANCAP, Morocco; Women's Study Center, UTC, India; Rural Development Women's Network, Rwanda; Association Mourouj II, Tunisia; Pakistan/India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy; Arab Research Center, Egypt; REDEH, Brazil; Move your World, Netherlands; Unione degli Studenti, Italy; Kerala Stree Vedhi, India; Women in Black, Philippines; Syrian Democratic Youth Union; Hidankyo, Japan Confederation of A+H Bombs Sufferers Organization, Japan; Women in Black, Jerusalem; Rights and Democracy, Canada; Land Center for Human Rights, Egypt; Nga Wahine Pacifica, Aotearoa; Creative Women's Forum, Palestine; Women's League, Syria; Vietnam Women's Union; Women's Vocational Training Center, Sierra Leone; Bundjalung Aboriginal Nation Association, Australia; Mayan Weavers Organization, Chiapas, Mexico; Survivors for Change, Ghana; Migrant Assistance Program, Thailand; Widows of the Genocide Association, Rwanda; O Emon Women's Club, Marshall Islands; Pacific Islander and Asian America Ministries; Indigenous Environmental Network; Gabriella, Philippines; Bayan, Philippines; IMADR; The National Council of Women of the Philippines; Filipino-Chinese Federation of Business and Professional Women, Philippines; Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), Philippines; CIEDS Collective, India



## International Court of Women Against the Economic Blockade Havana, Cuba, March 21-24, 2002

El Taller International, Institute of Philosophy Cuba, Federacion Cuban Mujeres in association with:

Asian Women's Human Rights Council, India/Philippines; Institute for Black Research, University of Natal, South Africa; Durban Social Forum, South Africa; University of the Western Cape Women Support Network, South Africa; ENDA - Third World, Sénégal, Environnement et Développement du Tiers-Monde Enda - TM; Center for Women's Studies, Croatia; Philippines Rural Reconstruction Movement; Proyecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas PRATEC), Peru; Migrante, Netherlands/Morocco; Equipo Pueblo, Mexico; Zene Zenama, Bosnia; Miftah, Palestine; Tebtebba Foundation, Indigenous, Philippines; BALADNA, Association for Arab Youth, Palestine 1948; LOLAS, Philippines (Lolas Para Sa Kapayapaan at Kumpensasyom); Lila Pilipina, Philippines; Vimochana, India; UBINIG, Bangladesh; Simorgh Women's Collective, Pakistan; International Action Centre, USA; Nuclear-Free Future Award; Kalyanamitra, Indonesia; Enda-TW/Relay for Urban Participatory development, Senegal; Women's Voice, India; Foundation for Women, Thailand; Bali Canti Sena, Indonesia; Australian National Council of Refugee Women; Na Koa Ikaka O Ka Lahui Hawaii; World Council of Churches, Switzerland; Movement for Democracy, Burma; Center for the Study of Developing Societies, India; Women in Black, India; Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, USA; Omomo Melen Pacific; Asian Indigenous Women's Network, Philippines; Panorama Haitadhaman, Tunisia; Indonesian National Commission Against Violence Against Women; Mahakama Ya Wamama Wa Africa, Kenya; Union of Lebanese Democratic Youth; Women's Study Center, UTC, India; Rural Development Women's Network, Rwanda; Pakistan/India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy; The Arab Commission for Human Rights, Egypt; REDEH, Rede de Desenvolvimento Humano, Brazil; Kerala Stree Vedhi, India; Women in Black, Philippines; Syrian Democratic Youth Union; Nga Wahine Pacifica, Aotearoa; Widows of the Genocide Association, Rwanda; O Emon Women's Club, Marshall Islands; Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), Philippines; International Needs, Ghana; Anti-Racism Initiative, South Africa; Vaughan Foundation, USA; National Alliance of Women's Organizations, India; Fondazione Rispetto et Parita, Italy; Center for Development Studies, India; CIEDS Collective, India; FIRE, Feminist International Radio Endeavour, Costa Rica; Global Fund for Women, USA; GEFONT, General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions; The Edmonds Institute, USA; VAMP, Veshya AIDS Muqabla Parishads, India; Cuadernos Feministas, Mexico; Durban Social Forum, South Africa; SANGRAM, Sampada Grameen Mahila Sanstha, India; Women's Association Zena Bih, Bosnia; Mali-Enjeu - Bamako, Mali; Center for Informal Education and Development Studies, India; Asociacion Madres de Plaza de Mayo, Argentina; Metaeconomics Research Center, Spain; Cobtrad, Community Based Trainers and Development Consultants, Kenya; Wise Women; Nga Wahine tiaki o Te Ao, Aotearoa; Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, Palestine; Palestinian Support Committee, South Africa; Center for Alternatives, Bangladesh; Women's Center, India; Migrantie, Netherlands; Anglican World Relief and Development Fund, Canada; Greenpeace Mediterranean; Laboratori de Somnis, Spain; Hurights, Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, Japan; National Land Commission, South Africa; Swiss Chatholic Lenten Fund; Women's Global Network for eproductive Rights, Netherlands; Women's Voice, India; Third World Network, Ghana; Forum for Social Studies, Ethiopia; FEFAM, Femme et Famille, Niger; Center for Refugee Research, Australia; Concerned Citizens Forum, South Africa; South African Civic Organization; Society for International Development, SID, Italy; Anti-Privatisation Forum, South Africa; L'Institut Méditerranéen, iMED, Italy; The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, Palestine; Migrant Assistance Programme, Thailand; O Emon Women's Club, Marshall Islands; Arid Lands Resource Management, Kenya; Fluir, Mexico; North American Women for Diversity, USA; National Association for Human Rights and Development, Egypt; Horn Relief, Kenya; Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession, Egypt; Hawaii Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries; Indigenous women, Australia; Local Artists Alliance for Sustainability, Australia; Consenso de Mujeres del Barco de la Paz, Colombia; Asociación de Mujeres cabeza de Familia, Colombia; Red mujeres de negro de castelló, Spain; Asociación mujeres por la salud y la pas de valencia, Spain; Centre de la Femme Arabe, Tunisia; Development Indian Ocean Network; World march of Women, Turkey; Non Violent Peace Force, USA; Union of Lebanese Democratic Youth; Le Gari ngo, France; Creative Women's Forum, Palestine; Association Paysanne, Democratic Republic of Congo; Council of Churches, Sierra Leone; ONG Vena Solidaria Centro para el cambio y Desarrollo Social, Peru;

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*Our deep gratitude to:*

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While the publication has focussed on the testimonies and events around the *World Court of Women Against War, For Peace*, we have also included a few testimonies from the Courts of women held prior to and following this Court. We include here special reports on the *World Court of Women Against Racism* held in August 2001 at the NGO Forum during the World Conference Against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, the *Indigenous and Refugee Women's Court* held in Sydney, Australia in December 2001 and the *International Court of Women Against the Economic Blockade* held in Havana, Cuba in March 2002.



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*You have come gathering with us  
you have made a circle with us*

*We want to give you the first flower opening from the earth*

*In this circle we pass each of you a shell from our mother sea  
hold it in your spirit and hear the stories she will tell you  
Come closer*

*we have more to give, this basket is very large  
we have stitched it from the stories of our lives*

*We offer you  
this memory of sunrise, the wave that seagulls snatched away;  
Come take it*

*We give each other seeds of a new way  
entering a sacred space, a sacred time  
spinning the wheel  
weaving the razai\*  
bringing a healing,  
caring, creating, celebrating  
reclaiming the earth for us all*

\* Quilt

## International Co-ordinating Committee

World Court of Women Against War, For Peace  
Cape Town, South Africa,  
March 6-9, 2001

Corinne Kumar	International Coordinator <i>World Court of Women against War, for Peace, India / Tunisia</i>
Madhu Bhushan	Asian Women's Human Rights Council, India
Nelia Sancho	Asian Women's Human Rights Council, Philippines
Sylvana Dantu	<i>Host Committee, South Africa</i>
Debbie Van Stade	<i>Host Committee, South Africa</i>
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Mililani Trask	<i>Pacific</i>
Thais Corral	<i>Latin America</i>
Georgina Gonzales	<i>Central America</i>
Zoya Rouhana	<i>Arab</i>
Sylvana Dantu	<i>Africa</i>



















*Here on the slopes of the hills,  
facing the dusk and canon of time  
close to the gardens of broken shadows  
We cultivate hope*

Mahmoud Darwish



Asian Women's Human Rights Council



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